

**A critical analysis of Stanley J Samartha's concept of
Christian dialogue with people of other living faiths,
and its relevance to the Indonesian context**

**NIMROT RAJAGUKGUK
STUDENT NO. 2659650**

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. CHRISTO LOMBARD

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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this work to my wife, Nur and our three children: Stephany, Hudson and Rebecca Rajagukguk.



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This thesis has been a process of reflection, requiring me to reassess my thinking on areas of Christian mission, strategy, policy and practice that I am accustomed to working with. Praise be to God, that through this research, He has guided me into new directions, to spheres of theology of mission that I had to engage with, and which I now consider critical to my knowledge and practices regarding Christian living in the world.

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ABSTRACT

Since the Uppsala General Assembly in 1968 the concept of 'Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths', developed within the World Council of Churches (WCC), has since then been implemented vigorously. This was done under pressure with strong initiatives by Asian theologians who operate in contexts where Christianity is a minority religion, such as in India and Indonesia. The concept of dialogue, influential as it has become, has also been widely criticized in many Christian groups (especially by Evangelical theologians), as being syncretistic and compromising for the sake of 'worldly peace'.

This study will investigate the WCC concept of 'Dialogue between Christianity and other Living Faiths', and its contributions in Asia, more specifically its impact on the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. The study will focus on an Indian theologian, Stanley J Samartha, one of the most influential figures in the promotion of this concept within the WCC. The research will entail an analysis of Samartha's views on Christian dialogue with other faiths, and a critical assessment of his work in the field of 'mission', through his publications and various WCC documents.

The contextual relevance of the study is highlighted by several spheres of tensions and conflicts: a) in the global context: the clash of cultures; b) in the ecumenical world: the divide between evangelicals and ecumenical; c) in the Asian context: the tension between dialogue and mission, between gospel and context; and d) in the Indonesian context: the ongoing tension between Muslims and Christians, and the tension between 'local gospel' and the Biblical gospel.

With this obvious global relevance and these contexts in mind, Samartha's concept of 'Inter-faith Dialogue' is studied in detail against the changes in missionary paradigm effected through various developments in the ecumenical arena: the incorporation of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches (as part of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the CWME), the stronger focus on finding a way of co-existence and even cooperation with other living faiths, since the Jerusalem assembly (1928) and Tambaram (1938) respectively, and the new paradigm of dialogue developing rapidly after Uppsala (1968), especially when Samartha was appointed as Director of the WCC Sub-Unit for Dialogue in 1971.

The main statements that will be analyzed are the 'six tentative suggestions' by Samartha which apparently became part of Interim Guidelines for dialogue in Addis Ababa 1971, and later was accepted at the Chiang Mai consultation (1977) by the WCC as 'Policy and Guideline to Dialogue with people of other faiths' (the Chiang Mai Statement), and the Kingston Revised Statement of 1979. For Christian dialogue with specifically Muslims, the WCC statements which will be analysed are the Ajaltoun statement 1970, the Broumana Statement of 1972, and the Chambesy statement of 1976,

The analysis of the development of Samartha's concept of dialogue, its strengths and weaknesses, will take place against the concept within Christian and Muslim circles in Indonesia. This part of the study will thus deal with some ministerial decrees and the Indonesian government's declarations about a return to *Pancasila* (a political

foundation for living together in respect) and *UUD 45* (a constitutional foundation for peace and harmony).

The theological assessment will be followed by a constructive proposal towards an alternative to merely dialogue for the sake of peaceful co-existence and social cooperation, which will be incorporating neglected aspects of the Christian gospel and mission in the world, for the sake of *honest dialogue* and *the integrity of Christianity as a world religion*. In the concluding chapter, various alternative approaches to the relationship between Christianity and other faiths, such as those of Knitter, Küng, Bosch and De Gruchy, but also from other individuals representing Conservative and Evangelical groups, like Newbigin, Stott, Winter, Hesselgrave, Winter, Howard and others, will be explored. The outcome of the research project will be the presentation of a constructive proposal which combines dialogue with a faithful approach to Jesus' "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18-20.

Key words: Asia, culture, dialogue, Indonesia, interfaith, mission, religions, Samartha, syncretism, World Council of Churches.

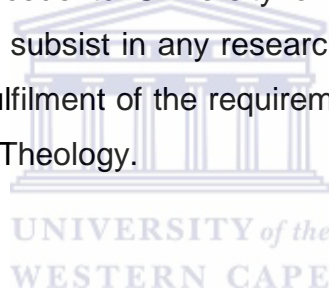


STATEMENT

I declare that *A Critical analysis of Stanley J. Samartha's concept of Christian Dialogue with people of other living faiths, and its relevance to the Indonesian context* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or assessment at any other university, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledge by means of complete references.

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.....
Nimrot Rajagukguk.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEM	- Basel Evangelical Mission
CCA	- Christian Conference of Asia
CSICMR	- Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations
CWME	- Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
DIAN	- Dialogue Antar Iman
HKBP	- Huria Kristen Batak Protestan
IARF	- International Association for Religious Freedom
ICC	- Indonesian Council of Churches
ICMI	- Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia
IF	- Islamic Foundation
IMC	- International Missionary Council
IRM	- International Review Mission
MADIA	- Majelis Dialogue antar Agama
NIV	- New International Version
NT	- New Testament
NU	- Nahdlatul Ulama
NU-WDIF	- Nahdlatul Ulama Wahid Dialogue Inter Faiths
OT	- Old Testament
PGI	- Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Indonesia
PIKI	- Persekutuan Intelektual Kristen Indonesia
SBY	- Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
SCM	- Student Christian Movement
UTC	- United Theological College
UUD 45	- Undang-Undang Dasar 45
WCC	- World Council of Churches
WMC	- World Missionary Conference
YMCA	- Youth Mission Christian Association

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

During the second half of the twentieth century, the World Council of Churches (WCC) concentrated its efforts on defining and propagating the concept of “dialogue” with other faiths. The theological legitimacy of this new approach to mission, in spite of its successful application in many contexts, has nevertheless been widely criticized by many Christian groups, especially evangelical theologians, who saw this approach as not only unbiblical, but also as syncretistic and compromising for the sake of worldly peace.

1.1.1 Different views of ‘Inter-Faith Dialogue’

It was at the WCC conference at Willingen (1952), that the WCC eventually came to a new insight and understanding that mission is not in the first instance the *church’s* mission, or *church-centric* mission (implicitly seen as: Western Churches’ mission). Mission came to be understood as belonging to God, as being God’s mission, “*missio Dei*”. Mission, while remaining a function of the worldwide Church is actually part of *God’s activities*. In mission, God is working in God's full existence as the Trinity. God's Trinitarian presence in world history is the foundation of missionary work. It means that God is also actively working within other religions, as in Christianity. This conclusion at the Willingen Conference created more controversy among scholars, Christian and non-Christian, in regard to the notion of Dialogue.

John Stott, one of the Evangelical scholars from England, in 1975 expressed the view that during the previous decade or two, the concept of ‘dialogue with men of other faiths’ had become the ‘ecumenical fashion’.¹ He raised the question: “Is there any room for dialogue in proclaiming the good news of Jesus?” Hans Küng, on the other hand, saw “interfaith dialogue” as important

from a political perspective, and not only as part of spiritual action. He is one of the European theologians, who strongly support the WCC concept of dialogue as the only way to accomplish peace in the world. In his book *Christianity and World Religions*, he firmly stated: “there will be no peace among the peoples of this world without peace among the world religions”.²

What Küng had suggested, is however not supported enthusiastically by all European theologians. Loffler, for instance, comments that the concept and purpose of dialogue itself probably need to be re-considered, especially after ‘the dialogue between Christians and Muslims’, in Broumana, Lebanon 1972: “The subsequent brutal conflict in the Lebanon, where the meeting took place, has proven that the meetings between Christians and Muslims had not progressed far enough in order to prevent the eruption of communal tensions...All theological debates go by the wind otherwise”.³

From what Loffler addressed had given the signal that ‘inter-faith dialogue’ is actually at the ‘yellow light’ since 1972. As a Lutheran theologian from Germany (who is closely linked to the work of the WCC through the Lutheran World Federation, as a strong member of the ecumenical movement), Loffler could see that “peace among religions” is still a distant dream within the ecumenical journey. According to him, the Broumana Dialogue had in fact embarked on the journey, but did not yet reach the goal. In his view, much still needs to be done to refine the concept of “Dialogue with Men of other Faiths”, especially in respect of Islam.

On the other hand, Bruce Nicholls, an Evangelical Christian, discovered that the role of dialogue as used by the WCC has changed over time. He asserted that in the New Delhi Assembly (1961), dialogue was seen as “a useful means of evangelism”. By the time of the Uppsala Assembly (1968), dialogue had been moved out of the sphere of mission and had become, instead, part of a more general and continuing “Christian obligation” in a world of various faiths.⁴

¹ Stott 1975:58

² Küng 1986:443

³ Loffler 1977:24-25.

⁴ Brewster 1979:514

From the Muslim side, some scholars are welcoming “dialogue” as long as it is not used for the purposes of proselytism. Mohamed Talbi, an emeritus professor at the University of Tunis stated: “If, in fact, dialogue is conceived as a new form of proselytism, a means of undermining convictions and bringing about defeat or surrender, sooner or later we shall find ourselves back in the same old situation as in the Middle Ages”. He encouraged Muslims to be open for dialogue in the perspective of *reconciliation and exchange of ideas*. He believed this kind of dialogue would bring some benefits to Islam, so he encouraged his fellow Muslims to move beyond the attitudes of the past. He said: “The train was already moving; Islam had only to catch it.”⁵

From this point of view, there is a clear sign that Muslims apparently fear that “Dialogue” may be used by Christian as a new tool for Evangelism, or in their terms: for purposes of “proselytism”. The argument seems to be that Christians cannot use dialogue for “evangelism”, but they can use it for “da’wa” (the Arabic term for the propagation of Islam). Bassam Tibi, a Muslim Professor who has been working mostly in Western countries, says that dialogue is a variety of conflict resolutions in the pursuit of world peace. Dialogue is not simply a detached exchange of views.⁶ He seems to agree with Hans Küng, expecting “inter-faith dialogue” to operate as interactive conflict resolution including political conflict solution.

Bassam Tibi makes an interesting point about Muslim migrants in Europe. He discovered that migration is used as an instrument for the Islamisation of the world (promoting the Muslim doctrine of “hijrah”), and he himself argued, *that Muslims should renounce this doctrine*. He then wrote: “Migration today is not a hijra in its religious meaning. In Islamic history, the expansion of Islam was associated with jihad, hijra and da’wa. The new patterns needed should be free from the hardships of this historical legacy of jihad to which the crusades were seemingly the response. I propose to dismiss both”.⁷ Thus, both Talbi and Tibi

⁵ Talbi 1990:83-88.

⁶ Tibi 2005:x

⁷ Tibi 2005:203

illustrate the fact that Muslims see inter-faith dialogue as a possible means of conflict resolution, but also as a tool for the propagation of Islam, or for “Islamisation”.

Hendrik Kraemer, the well known Dutch Missionary and missiologist, on the other hand, had insisted in his book *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, which was used as the preparatory study at the Tambaram conference (1938), “that the biblical faith, based on God’s encounter with humankind, is radically different from all other forms of religious faith. The only true way to know the revealed will of God is by responding to the divine intervention in history, in Christ”.⁸

Similar to the position of Karl Barth, Kraemer emphasized the uniqueness of the revelation in Christ and considered Christianity as a religion to be as human as any other. Many Asian theologians disagree with Kraemer and challenged his view about the Gospel in discontinuity with other religious traditions. For them, it was inconceivable that God had no witnesses among the nations of the earth and in the religious life and experience of others. “All participants agreed on the special revelatory character of the Christ event, but many had difficulty with Kraemer’s view of religions as *totalitarian systems* of human thought and practice”.⁹

John Hick tried to accommodate some of Kraemer’s ideas, but he actually in his ‘Copernican revolution’, held on to most of Samartha’s dialogical ‘pluralistic’. In his book, *God has many names*, Hick distinguished two kinds of Christian dialogue with other faiths. First, he mentions purely confessional dialogue in which each partner witnesses to his own faith, convinced that this has absolute truth whilst his partner’s has only relative truth. The other form of dialogue is so called truth-seeking dialogue in which both partners are conscious that the Transcendent Being is infinitely greater than their own limited vision of it, and in which they accordingly seek to share their visions in the hope that each may be helped towards a fuller awareness of the Divine Reality before which they both

⁸ Kraemer 1991:282

⁹ Lossky 1991:282

stand.¹⁰ Hick clearly chose for this second kind of dialogue: “Christianity must, I believe, move emphatically from the confessional to the truth-seeking stance in dialogue”, while the integrity of particular religions must be recognized.¹¹ This move was seen as a “Copernican revolution” in missionary theory.

Since the concept of dialogue between Christianity and other faiths has been implemented, the world has been facing a big variety of controversial issues, such as the tension between “Ecumenical and Evangelical”; Western and Asian cultures; the Christian World and the non-Christian World; Biblical and syncretistic approaches to inculturation; and peace and conflict. These ongoing tensions, “in reality”, has led to serious new reflections in “theory” on the paradigms being used in Mission.¹²

1.1.2 Global Context: ongoing tensions

‘Christian Dialogue with people of other Living Faiths’ or simply ‘Inter-Faith Dialogue’ is the name that has been given to what has become a radically new approach to Christian mission. It is a concept closely associated with Stanley J. Samartha from India, since the WCC Assembly of 1968 in Uppsala, Sweden, when he suggested the term to redefine the relationship between Christians and people from other religions.

The sub-unit “Dialogue with People of Living Faiths” within the WCC then set up in 1971 with the aim to promote inter-religious dialogue, to help the churches to reflect on the theological significance of the other religious traditions, the actual practice of dialogue and its implications for the life and ministry of the Churches, and lastly to be the link of the WCC to international inter-religious bodies and organizations.¹³

Since the WCC approved the concept of “true dialogue” as engaged in with complete honesty and openness, without prejudice or preconceived solutions, it

¹⁰ Hick 1980:81

¹¹ Hick 1980: 89

¹² Bosch 1991:381

¹³ Evers 1998:1

started dawning on evangelical Christians that, as Samartha has stated himself, a possible outcome of this new missionary approach could be that Christians might be won over to Islam, just as legitimately as Muslims might be won to Christianity.¹⁴

Brewster evaluated this concept as “disturbing for evangelicals and most disconcerting.”¹⁵ In spite of the new dynamic brought about between religions of the world through the propagation of “dialogue”, religious tensions between Christians and non-Christians, especially Muslims, and doctrinal tensions between evangelical and ecumenical groups, within Christianity, were also sparked afresh.

1.1.3 The Asian Context

a) *The impact of Asian theologians on the concept of ‘Inter-Faith Dialogue’*

The period between the International Missionary Council (IMC) Conference in Tambaram, India (1938) and the WCC Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden (1968), can be seen as a period of very active participation by Asian and African theologians in the work and vision of the WCC. This was the time when they initiated a change of missionary emphasis. It is necessary to note that the focus of this study will for obvious reasons be on the Indonesian context, which however does not mean that the outcomes may not be relevant to the African context.

At Uppsala they challenged the Assembly to reconsider the Christian attitude towards other religions. They expected ecumenical Christianity to re-think the problem of the Christian missionary approach dealing with other religions or secular world-views, in order to present to them the Christian message.¹⁶ The question was asked whether people of other faiths should continue to be regarded as objects of Christian mission, or as “*partners* in the global

¹⁴ Samartha 1971:34

¹⁵ Mc Curry 1979:515

¹⁶ Hallencreutz 1969:16

community, working together for common human purposes”.¹⁷ Paul Devanandan from India and his colleagues M.M. Thomas and D.G Moses, as well as S.Kulendran and D.T. Niles from Sri Lanka, had introduced the idea of partnership into WCC discussions as a matter of concern in the missionary approach to people of other faiths.

Paul Devanandan was a professor in history of religions at the United Theological College, Bangalore, India. He was a teacher of Stanley J. Samartha and the founder of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS). He affirmed “Christian dialogue with other Faiths” as the relevant method, especially in Asian lands.

M.M. Thomas wrote about him: “Devanandan affirms that if religious faith is to be regarded also in terms of response, it would be difficult for the Christian to deny that these deep inner stirrings of the human spirit are in response to the creative activity of the Holy Spirit. The only alternative is to confess either the Christian ignorance of God’s ways with people, or the Christian blindness in refusing to believe in God’s redemptive work with people of other faiths”.¹⁸

At this stage, Devanandan seemed was followed by other Asian experts, such as Paul Knitter and another Asian theologian like Ariarajah, asserted: that within other religions also there are signs of God’s redemptive work, as in Christianity.

M.M. Thomas was Chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, from 1968 to 1975. He was also a successor of Devanandan for many years, as Director of CISRS, in Bangalore, India. In his book, *Risking Christ for Christ’s Sake* (1987) he wrote:

“The only creative way out for humankind in the modern context of pluralism, it seems, is for each religion, culture and ideology to recognize that people are in a situation of dialogical existence, and to explore the possibility of cooperation

¹⁷ Samartha 1996:VIII

¹⁸ Thomas 1987:89

and pro-existence, without in the process losing its own ultimate spiritual basis”.¹⁹

Thomas here emphasized Christian to recognise of other existing religions without losing its own spiritual basis. Samartha himself quoted his ecumenical seniors such as Thomas and Devanandan very often in his books, as we shall investigate in more detail.

Another Indian theologian who also influenced Samartha’s concept is Raimon Panikkar. Panikkar, in his book *The Intra-religious dialogue* (1978), emphasized that the first requisite for dialogue is that we understand each other. He insisted that the first prerequisite for this understanding on the intellectual level is that we speak the same language. He adds: “Lest we use different words to convey the same idea and therefore take them to mean different things”.²⁰ As part of the rules of the game in religious encounter, he suggested some points: it had to be free from particular and general apologetics. And, that inter-faith dialogue had to face the challenge of conversion.²¹ He continues his argument:

“If the encounter is to be an authentically religious one, it must be totally loyal to truth and open to reality. The genuinely religious spirit is not loyal only to the past; it also keeps faith with the present. A religious person is neither a fanatic nor someone who already has all the answers. He also is a seeker, a pilgrim, making his own uncharted way...The religious person finds each moment new and is but the more pleased to see in this both the beauty of a personal discovery and the depth of a perennial treasure that his ancestors in the faith have handed down. And yet, to enter the new field of the religious encounter is a challenge and a risk. The religious person enters this arena without prejudices and preconceived solutions, knowing full well he may in fact have to lose a particular belief or particular religion altogether. He trusts in truth. He enters

¹⁹ Thomas 1987:3

²⁰ Panikkar 1978:8

²¹ Panikkar 1978: 27

unarmed and ready to be converted himself. He may lose his life - he may also be born again.”²²

Panikkar thus sees Christianity and other religions as equal heritages, traditions, which we have to approach in the same understanding in relation to each other: we speak one language, with no apologetics to anyone, but with total loyalty to truth and openness to reality.

Samartha, as one of Devanandan's ex-students, in an important essay on the unity of humankind, distinguished two kinds of dialogue: First, he says, we have dialogue in which the main purpose is to investigate together certain questions with the intent of reaching agreement wherever it is possible, e.g. investigatory dialogues of science or other disciplines in which we need intellectual agreement. The second kind of dialogue is taking place in the area of beliefs and convictions, where spiritual commitments confront each other and where unanimity is unlikely to be reached. At this level, where people of different beliefs live together, Samartha believes the second kind of dialogue brings about an encounter of commitments. Such dialogue is not primarily one of truth and error but of respect for the freedom of people to hold on to their convictions without pressure.²³ This is one of the reasons, according to Samartha, why religious liberty is such an important issue in multi religious societies. He emphasized: “The dialogue is a common quest for liberty and as a consequence of progress in the liberty of each, a common effort to advance in the direction of Truth”.²⁴

Ariarajah, Samartha's successor as Director for the Unit of Dialogue with other Faith within WCC, wrote in his book *Not without my Neighbour*. “It was inconceivable that the God of love, compassion and grace, whom we have come to know in Jesus Christ, would not have a relationship with people who are God's own creation.”²⁵ He then quotes the Baar statements by a group of theologians who tried to resolve the tension between Dialogue and Mission

²² Panikkar 1978:27

²³ Samartha 1971:145

²⁴ Nelson 1971:146

²⁵ Ariajah, 1999:116

which he seems to agree with totally: “Where there is truth and wisdom in their teachings, and love and holiness in their living, this, like any wisdom, insight, knowledge, understanding, love and holiness that is found among us, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We also affirm that God is with them as they struggle, along with us, for justice and liberation.”²⁶

In this case, Ariarajah sees the presence of God in other religions via human expressions: of selfless love and genuine holiness. He adds, “As religious communities draw closer together and enter into deeper dialogue, Christians can no longer withhold opinion or refuse to enter into a meaningful relationship based on a more genuine appreciation of the religious life of our neighbours”.²⁷ In other words, in the context of pluralism, Ariarajah sees inter-faith dialogue as a forum for building relationships and religious appreciation.

b) *Samartha’s very specific contribution*

What are the reasons for choosing Samartha as primary resource in this study? Firstly, it has to be recognized that he had been the most influential figure in the history of the WCC Interfaith Dialogue. He was the most important voice of this influential movement. His ideas about dialogue eventually dominated and directed the WCC in establishing its mission in relation to people of other faiths. Even though the idea of dialogue itself was already growing in the circles of the IMC conferences since 1938, yet in fact it cannot be denied that Samartha was the one who proposed the name “dialogue with people of living faiths”, when he was still Secretary of the Department of Studies in Mission and Evangelism of the WCC (1968-1970). Several scholars, like Dirk Mulder, Schrottenboer and Ariarajah called him the architect of inter-religious dialogue in the WCC. Helen Hunter, also quoted by Klootwijk in his book, sees Samartha as a liberal and contextual Asian theologian.²⁸ He was the one who wrote the concept of guidelines for Dialogue, initially called “interim guidelines”, which was later changed to “Policy and Interim Guidelines to Dialogue”, at the Chiang Mai WCC

²⁶ Ariarajah 1999:16

²⁷ Ariarajah 1999:123

²⁸ Klootwijk 1992:316

Theological Consultation of 1977. Finally, he was the one who travelled all over the world, including many visits to Indonesia - for promoting the idea and concept, and implementing 'inter-faith dialogue'.

Secondly, Samartha was *the first Asian theologian* to be appointed as Director of the WCC Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths (1971-1980). To me, as an Asian Christian who is also concerned about Christianity and pluralism in Indonesia, the presence of Samartha as "father of inter-faith dialogue", is not only a prestigious achievement, but also a curious stimulus for reflection about the background and motivation for such a provocative theological concept. From what Samartha had achieved and contributed through WCC it became evident that Asians, who earlier may have felt inferior towards Western superiority stamped by colonialism, even in theology, experienced equality, and perceived themselves not only as receivers but also as contributors, at least in defining core theological concepts.

Thirdly, Samartha's contributions have not only been influential; he has always been a controversial figure, and his concepts need to be tested and critically assessed, especially by Asian theologians. His own seniors from within the WCC had even accused him of being the one who introduced and promoted "syncretism" in the agendas of the WCC.²⁹ Nevertheless, the idea of 'Inter-Faith Dialogue' is still continually being spread by his successor within the WCC. There is a perception in evangelical circles, that his notion of "inter-faith dialogue" has driven most Asian churches to function as "traditional social institutions", instead of "dynamic fellowships", as Body of Christ; that because of him, the WCC had 'neglected' the explicit verbal proclamation of the Gospel to the millions who have never been challenged to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Saviour.³⁰

²⁹ Samartha 1996: 29

³⁰ Stransky 1991:254

c) *Contextual theology in Asia*

One of the crucial issues discussed since Tambaram (1938) was about religious pluralism in Asia. For many Asians, as well as many people in the two-thirds world, such as Africa, a sense of nationalism and indigenous religious identity functions as manifestation of a revolt against colonialism. In the process, several Asian religious traditions were challenged to renew their consciousness and self-expression. This interplay of conflict and self-confidence has become known as “the Asian renewal factor”.³¹ Samartha had opened the door for Asian theologians to more seriously take into account the interaction between religious beliefs and social change in Asia, especially to re-discover their own national identity.

The religious and cultural pluralism in Asia made “the concept of dialogue” more accepted in Asia than in any other part of the world. The WCC had given birth to the East Asia Christian conference, later called the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). Apart from that, the Indonesian Churches Council (ICC), and other National Church Councils in Asia had their origins in the ecumenical movement.

At the academic level, Samartha contributed to huge changes in the curriculum of theological colleges, on behalf of the WCC, especially since the WCC Chiang Mai statement of 1977. The contextualization of Theology and the study of other religions became compulsory modules for all theological students. Nevertheless, implementation of contextualization in Asia was not always smooth. This issue is still clouded in polemics and controversy, just like the whole concept of “dialogue”.

Newbigin gave two reasons why “Contextual theology” does not give satisfaction in Asia: Firstly, because it has tended to relate the gospel to past traditions and to underestimate the forces in every society which are making for change; secondly, because it sometimes seemed to imply that what the missionaries brought with them was the pure gospel.³² This is a reality in many

³¹ Plantinga 1999:3

³² Newbigin 1989:142

parts of Asia: to either fall back on past tradition or to remain, boots and all, within the western missionary culture. This, however, still does not resolve the very real tensions within Asian theology. Theological design for a pluralistic context in Asia remains a major challenge for Asian theologians and for Indonesian theologians particularly. Samartha's concept of dialogue had offered the wider spaces for pluralism to be explored. A question that needs to be answered by any critical study of his theological legacy is whether these spaces were not allowed to become too wide. The receiver context seems to become more important than the message of the gospel itself. However this question will be answered, it cannot be denied that the process of contextualization was inspiring ICC to launch a study project in 1981, the so-called "Developmental Study for Theology and Culture in Asia". It is thus important to carefully study Samartha's concept of 'dialogue with people of other religions', in order to find the theological balance between "Gospel" and the context of "pluralism".

1.1.4 The Indonesian Context

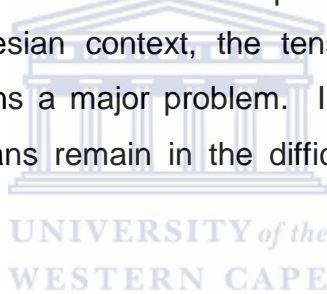
a) *'Local Gospel' vs. Christian Bible?*

Since the employment of Dialogue by the WCC, as a theological and sociological solution to the pluralism in Asia, the authority of the Bible as the Word of God has gradually changed, both in the Theological Colleges and in some churches which are affiliated to the WCC (the so-called "Ecumenical group"). This may have been a side-effect of a too wide contextualisation by Samartha that the WCC might not initially have been aware of. It is interesting to note that in 1982, after Samartha retired, the WCC again used the term 'evangelism' as part of 'mission' which the Evangelical group in Lausanne welcomed, even though the concept of evangelism remains to be connected to common social human needs.

The internal problem in Christianity between Ecumenicals and Evangelicals which still remains today is that the perception has grown in more evangelical circles, in which I am also working among university students since 1991, that the Bible is no longer seen by the ecumenical movement as directly relevant in

modern contexts. In some theological faculties affiliated to ecumenical circles, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is no longer seen as a universal gospel, but as a gospel only in its original context, as Christian tradition within the local Judeo-Christian sphere. As an impact of that, there are other local gospels such as the original Greek Christian gospel. In the contemporary context one could thus speak in Indonesia of the Christian Javaness gospel, the Halmahera gospel, etc.³³

A sign of this is that in the Indonesian context, Christians are expected to turn to a “local gospel” that is seen as available within each and every culture and tradition from the more than 350 different ethnic groups, and indigenous religions.³⁴ Traditions and legends in each tribe become a source of the local gospel in the name of contextualization as one of the fruits of Christian dialogue with other faiths and dialogue with cultures. In spite of all these efforts to employ resources from the Indonesian context, the tension between Muslims and Christians in society remains a major problem. Ironically, there is a growing perception that the Christians remain in the difficult position as a victimized minority.³⁵



b) *Ongoing tensions in Christian–Muslim relations*

Indonesia claims to be neither a religious state, nor a secular state. In fact, however, the Indonesian government in making decisions is invariably influenced by Islam and limits the influence of Christianity in all sectors. An example of this was the Decree, jointly issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of the Interior, on September 13, 1969, containing restrictive conditions for Christians to build their Churches (but without any such restrictions for Muslims to build Mosques). This has caused continuous friction between Muslims and Christians.

³³ Natar 2004:91

³⁴ Natar 2004:91

³⁵ Van den End (2004: 945) draws attention to Indonesia’s 2004 statistics, that Indonesia had a population of 220 million of which Muslims were 87%, Christians 7%; Hindu 3% and Buddhists 2%.

Another Declaration was issued by the Minister of Interior, on May 5, 1975, prohibiting Christians from using their homes as places for worship. The most difficult of these decrees for Christians in Indonesia was when the Minister of Religious Affairs banned religious preaching to those who already profess a religion, including at Christian schools (Decree nr. 70/1978). 'Christianity can not be taught to non-Christian pupils, even though they are at the Christian schools, but the school must provide a teacher who has the same religion as the pupils'.³⁶ In government schools, it is compulsory for non-Muslim female pupils to wear the 'scarf', like the Muslim women. Since 2000, more and more provinces apply the Muslim Shari'ah law in their respective religions, causing more and more oppression towards Christians.

It is ironical and difficult to understand that these decrees were designed not long after Samartha visited Indonesia on behalf of WCC, promoting "Inter-Faith Dialogue", and had a meeting with the (late) Indonesian Religious Affairs Minister Mukti Ali in the early 70s.³⁷

The period of highest tensions between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia was between 1996 and 2004. Many people were killed from both groups, but with a majority of Christians who were suffering the most, especially in the Moluccas and central Sulawesi area, in the eastern part of Indonesia. The Indonesian Council of Churches (ICC), as part of the WCC, was involved in dialogue with the Muslim leaders in the area to seek peace and reconciliation between the two parties. Under the guidance of the Indonesian government and military force, the two parties signed the peace agreement that was called 'Malino'. The Christians, nevertheless, still could not come back to their homes, because most of their houses were already burned down, and others had been occupied by Muslims. Thousands of Christians became refugees in their home country, and many of them became strangers in their home land, making one wonder about the power of dialogue with other Faiths and what such an

³⁶ The complete description of the decrees by Religious Affairs (Keputusan Menteri Agama no 70 tahun 1978 'pedoman penyiaran Agama') had been re-written by Libertus Jehani in his book ' Tanya Jawab Tentang SKB 2 Menteri (Question and Answer about the joint decrees by two Ministers) Cf. Hardawiryana 1982:34-70 and Jehani (2006:79-87)

³⁷ Samartha 1996:31

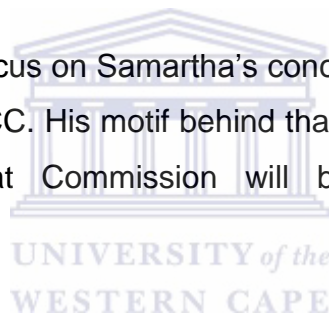
approach had in fact achieved.³⁸ Even though some people remarked that the rise of fundamentalism and fanaticism can be assigned to the failure of dialogue, yet for Samatha, that is not the sign of failure but the result of an absence of dialogue.³⁹

An important aspect of this study is thus also to investigate to what extent the WCC and ICC concept and implementation of dialogue succeeded to overcome these recurring tensions between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

In view of the foregoing development of the main focus of this study, the research problem can be formulated as follows:

This research project will focus on Samatha's concept of "Inter-Faith Dialogue", as developed within the WCC. His motif behind that concept and his theological concepts of Jesus' Great Commission will be investigated historically, systematically and critically.



Towards the end of the study, and as an intended outcome of the research, I shall also suggest an alternative, viable definition of mission in a Muslim context, a definition which will include dialogue without sacrificing the element of Christian witness merely for the sake of a common humanity or worldly peace.

Formulated in one sentence, the research problem pours down to the question:

How should Samatha's concept of 'dialogue with people of other faiths' be assessed social-historically and theologically in view of Christianity's global mission to proclaim God's good news in Indonesia today?

I will assess Samatha's concept of "interfaith dialogue" within WCC, and the paradigm of the understanding of Christ's "Great Commission", by taking the

³⁸ Arifianto 2009:73 Cf. Pinontoan 2002.

³⁹ Samatha 1996:82

following considerations into account (and these considerations will play a role in my own attempt at suggesting a new missionary paradigm for the Asian, specifically Muslim context in Indonesia):

Firstly, I shall assess *the concept of Mission and the idea of Dialogue* in the circles of the IMC and WCC until 1961, and how it was developed during the WCC assembly and conferences since 1961 to 1980.

Secondly, I shall specifically *investigate Samarth's concepts by analyzing the relevant WCC documents*, where Samartha had the main roll before he retired in 1980, such as the Interim Guidelines (1971), the Broumana Statement (1972), the Chambesy Statement (1976), the Chiang Mai statement (1977), and the Kingston Revised Statement (1979). This year, the policy and guidelines to Dialogue was published for the first time

Thirdly, I shall assess specifically *the significance, the strengths and weaknesses of Samarth's view on dialogue between Christians and Other Faiths*: what are its implications for Christian mission today, after nearly 70 years in which this concept had been employed within the WCC circle of influence. His personal background will be carefully studied to relate to his later theological concepts on this matter. In this regard special attention will be given to the following points of influence:

a) One of his strong points on dialogue between Christians and other Faiths, is that Christians and their dialogue partners really should be 'partners' in the global community, and working together for common human purposes such as justice, liberation, poverty and ecology.

b) The six principles or "guidelines" for dialogue which he produced in 1971 were so influential in Christianity (within the work of the WCC) in its relation to other faiths right from the beginning, that the idea and its implementation in practice are still ongoing under the flag of "Inter-Faith Dialogue". Nevertheless, it has been criticised for missing the uniqueness of Christ as the only Saviour in the interfaith dialogue, in spite of Samarth's emphasis that genuine dialogue

demands humility and love, and that dialogue is both an expression of faith and a sign of hope.⁴⁰

c) Samartha's notion that some Christians are being afraid of dialogue with other Faiths because of fear of losing identity, fear of being shaken in their traditional beliefs, or fear to acknowledge the truth in another camp⁴¹ is a challenge that had been taken seriously in the ecumenical discourse.

Finally, I will specifically assess Samartha's concept within the current Indonesian context, in order to find what concept of dialogue is really suitable and relevant, and how this should be implemented in the Indonesian context; both in the community and among the Christian Students at their campuses. (This chapter will be more of a constructive contribution).

This study will be careful not to generalize judgments about Samartha's contribution in the ecumenical world, since his own Hindu context is very different to the Muslim context in Indonesia. The study will therefore carefully take different contexts into consideration. However, the question remains: how will we describe the uniqueness of Christ Jesus and His claim as The Truth if we simply uncritically agree with his notion "in general"?

In my own assessment of Samartha's theological contribution to the debate on mission and dialogue, I shall be guided by these pointers. The constructive proposal that will be attempted in answer to Samartha's challenge for Indonesian context today will also be dealt with via these details. The constructive suggestions about dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia are thus context-specific. They may perhaps be used in ongoing debates in a global context but they are not presented with such pretence.

⁴⁰ Samartha 1996:82

⁴¹ Samartha 1981:x-xi

1.3 Aims of the Study

From the preceding background and context, it should be clear that this study will be focused on Stanley J. Samartha's concept of 'Christian dialogue with people of other faiths'. We acknowledge that many theologians have already written about Samartha, such as Kosuke Koyama from Japan (1989), Sudarshana Devadhar from India (PhD Thesis 1987) and Klootwijk from Nederland (PhD thesis 1992). Other contributions have come from Glyn Richard from the UK, Richard Drummond and Paul Knitter, including Arthur F. Glasser from an Evangelical perspective.⁴²

The intention here is not to improve on or repeat the valid points raised in many studies on the WCC history and other scholars' views on dialogue. The study nevertheless can not be separated from those chapters from the joint history of IMC and the WCC which provided the context for Samartha's specific contributions regarding "inter-faith dialogue". For this reason, *a brief history of Inter-faith Dialogue, looked at both historically and theologically*, will be presented, besides an in-depth study of Samartha and his concepts of "Dialogue" and "Mission".

This study will entail a detailed analysis of his views on Christian dialogue with other faiths, and *a critical assessment of the resultant missionary paradigm* of the WCC, as implemented in the Asian context. In conversation with Samartha and several contemporary scholars, *a constructive proposal* towards an alternative and hopefully more viable missionary paradigm, specifically for the Indonesian context, will be attempted.

1.4 Premise of the Study

The study about Samartha's concept of interfaith dialogue will cover the whole history of the idea of interfaith dialogue itself, from the beginning, through the time of its being embodied in the global WCC ministry, up to the point where it is re-examined today in the Indonesian context.

1.4.1 Historical Context and background for 'Inter-Faith Dialogue'

In the time of the Reformation, in the 16th century, there were already interesting examples of religious conversation between two parties in Christianity, with the purpose to avoiding church division. This conversation, called '*Bilateral dialogue*'⁴³ between two Christian parties such as Catholics and Lutherans; or Lutherans and Anglicans, is however not the kind of dialogue to be analyzed in this thesis. The concept of Dialogue to be studied here is normally called '*Inter-faith dialogue*', or sometimes '*Multilateral Dialogue*'.⁴⁴ In focusing on this type of dialogue, we study the struggle to comprehend the relationship between Christianity and other religious traditions. According to the WCC Consultation in Chiang Mai (1977), 'Pluralism in the Community' is the motive for inter-faith dialogue.⁴⁵ In terms of this reality, pluralism in the community, Samartha stated that dialogue is part of the living relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies as they share in the life of the community.⁴⁶

The 'idea' of Inter-faith dialogue itself, however, was already 'signalled' since the World Missionary conference at Edinburgh in 1910. "The question of Christian understanding of and relationship to other religious traditions became one of the important issues of that conference."⁴⁷ The same question was again raised at the IMC conference in Jerusalem (1928) and sharply debated at the Tambaram conference (1938) under the theme 'the missionary approach in relation to other religions'. Devanandan was one of the first who saw a new challenge to reconsider the Christian attitude to people of other religions. The primary terms of reference to finding the right "formula" were: "the Word of God" and "the living faiths of men".⁴⁸

In the ongoing discussion two things were realized: On the one hand, this terminology reflected the influence of dialectical theology on the relationship of

⁴² Klootwijk 1992:16

⁴³ Meyer 1991:280

⁴⁴ Samartha 1996:169

⁴⁵ Scherer and Bevans 1992:12

⁴⁶ Samartha 1981:1

⁴⁷ Wainwright 1991:282

⁴⁸ Samartha 1966:17

the Christian message to human religion; on the other hand, it expressed a concern for the missionary confrontation with 'religious man' in his factual existential commitments and not merely his general religious framework.⁴⁹ There was a tension within the Study Committee between those who were seeking a theological statement clarifying the relation between the gospel and religions, and those whose main concern was with the communication of the gospel to the non-Christian world.⁵⁰ Dialectical theology was seemingly more dominant in the discussion, at least initially.

In relation to a missionary approach, it means that the people of other Faiths also had to be recognized and treated as partners, working together, but at the same time, the differences due to different religious affiliations, had to be admitted realistically. The question was how these two different aspects could be united.

Ten years after Tambaram, the World Council of Churches (WCC) was founded in 1948. The purpose of this new organization, according to Visser 't Hooft, as the first WCC General Secretary, was "to express the unity of the Christian churches in worship *and in witness*, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ".⁵¹

Since IMC eventually integrated into the WCC in 1961, the missionary movement was then taken over by the WCC under the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), especially in relation to other religions. The dialectic question about the Word of God and its relation to other religions, lingering since 1938, was then answered when Samartha proposed: "Dialogue with People of Living Faiths".⁵² The problem however was that this was done, at that stage, without any further description of what the nature of dialogue, its purpose, and method of implementation was supposed to be.

⁴⁹ Hallencreutz 1969:16

⁵⁰ Samartha 1996: 39

⁵¹ Hooft 1982:68

⁵² Samartha 1996:21

In 1971, a separate and distinct Sub-Unit for Dialogue was established for relation with neighbours of other faiths, where Samartha was appointed as the first Director.⁵³ Since then, “Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies” which today is called ‘inter-faith dialogue’ was continually debated. The WCC, nonetheless, only took official stance on this controversial issue at the Central Committee meeting in Kingston, in 1979.⁵⁴

It speaks for itself that all these historical details will have to be dealt with in order to reconstruct the proper context for Samartha’s contribution in the perennial debate on how the Word of God, coming to us through God’s “special revelation”, should be communicated in a pluralist society. This will be done in chapter 2 of this study, where theological factors that determine the context will also be addressed.

1.4.2 The theological context and relevance of ‘Inter-faith Dialogue’

Ariarajah, as Samartha’s successor after 1981, states: “Interfaith dialogue was understood as *an encounter* between people who live by different faith traditions, in an atmosphere of *mutual trust and acceptance*”⁵⁵ He further insisted that Dialogue did not require giving up, hiding or seeking to validate one’s own religious conviction; in fact, the need for being rooted in one’s own tradition to be engaged in a meaningful dialogue *was emphasized, as were common humanity and the need to search in a divided world for life in community.*

He was here referring to a debate at the Tambaram Conference in 1938, within the IMC about “a divided world” which meant the Christian world on one side, and the non-Christian world on the other side. Samartha commented about such a divided world that both the Christian and the non-Christian world conceptually had become a “missiological prison”.⁵⁶

⁵³ Samartha 1981: VII

⁵⁴ Scherer and Bevans 1992:12

⁵⁵ Ariarajah 1991:285

⁵⁶ The Christian world was understood as Western countries; Asia, Africa and Latin America were seen as the “non-Christian world” (Samartha 1996:39).

Within this conceptual framework, there is a dichotomy between Christians and non-Christians. According to Samartha, it means there was no more freedom and joy for a non-Christian world and ideologies, in the one world that was created by God and supposed to be shared by people of all faiths and ideological convictions. Samartha based his ideas on the thinking of Paul Devanandan and M.M. Thomas on this matter.⁵⁷

Ariarajah admitted that the concept of dialogue itself was still differently interpreted, even amongst the members of WCC itself. *Some* see dialogue primarily, “as a new and creative relationship within which one can learn about and respect others but also can give authentic witness to one’s own faith.” *Others* see dialogue as an important historical moment in the development of religious traditions and claim that each of the faith traditions in dialogue is challenged and transformed by the encounter with others. *Still others* view dialogue “as a common pilgrimage towards the truth, within which each tradition shares with the others the way it has come to perceive and respond to that truth.”⁵⁸ Until the WCC Conference in Nairobi (1975), the concept of ‘inter-faith dialogue’ was still part of an ongoing debate and the question remained how to put it into practice, and what the theological assumptions about other faiths at the heart of Christian mission actually were.⁵⁹

1.4.3 Stanley. J. Samartha’s personal profile as an ecumenical theologian

After integrating relevant historical and theological factors to determine the context of Samartha’s ecumenical theological contributions within the circles of the WCC, the study will focus on Samartha’s own personal background, development and profile. This will be done in detail in chapter 2 (see 2.1). It is an important hermeneutical point of this thesis to show how Samartha’s personal background and history has been a determinative factor in the development of his brand of Christian theology. Since his birth in Hindu culture,

⁵⁷ Samartha 1996: 150

⁵⁸ Lossky 1991:285

⁵⁹ Lossky 1991:285

in Southern India, in 1920, his ideas were shaped and reshaped by different experiences within the Christian world: his Catholic schooling, his closeness to his own culture, his exposure to the Basel mission with its evangelical zeal for the world, the different experience of Christianity's global impact via the Student Christian Movement (SCM), his further theological studies in Bangalore, especially under Devanandan, his further studies at Union Theological Seminary under Paul Tillich and other influential theologians, and the reaffirmation, via Malcolm Pitt, of the special vibrancy of his own Hindu culture.

All these personal details and developments will be researched and organized into a separate paragraph as part of chapter 2, to complete the background research in order to focus on the real issue: Samartha's concept of 'Dialogue', and its impact on an ecumenical understanding of 'Mission'.

1.4.4 Samartha and the theology of 'Mission' and 'Dialogue'

a) *Samartha's concept of Mission*

Against the background provided, it should be evident that for Samartha, the time has come within the Christian tradition, and especially within ecumenical discourse, to restate the meaning of 'Mission' in multi-religious contexts that it was not only about proselytism, but primarily about taking into account also the integrity of other faiths, and co-operation in pursuing common purposes like justice, peace and human rights.

He started questioning the age-old assumption about the essence of Christian mission by saying: "Is the Christian mission the only mission of God in the entire world at all times? To claim that only Christians have mission and that others only engage in proselytization would indeed be nothing less than arrogance although it might wear the cloak of deceptive Christian humility."⁶⁰ Samartha further asserted that conversion is not from one religion to another, but from

⁶⁰Samartha 1971: 144

unbelief in God to belief in God, and that mission is not the church's work but God's own work.⁶¹

In his book, *One Christ many Religions*, he stated "mission is God's continuing activity through the Spirit to mend the brokenness of creation, to overcome the fragmentation of humanity, and to heal the rift between humanity, nature, and God."⁶² This mission is not only for Christians according to Samartha, but also for other faiths. In a religiously plural world, Christians together with their neighbours of other faiths are called to participate in God's continuing mission in the world. This has nothing to do with the expansion of Christianity as religion or the statistical increase of Christians in the world. Together with other Faiths, Christians are practicing their *mission* to serve the poor, to remove ignorance, to heal the sick, caring for the orphans and widows irrespective of their religious or ideological affiliations. These services must be done without a hidden agenda for conversion of some, but as the Christian response to God's love in Christ. Here, *diakonia* ('service') becomes *marturia* ('witness').⁶³

The distinctiveness of Christian mission lies precisely in its being Christian, that is, in its being rooted in God through Jesus Christ and being active in the world in the power of the Spirit, without denying, however, that neighbours of other faiths have their 'missions' in the global community".⁶⁴ Christians are doing their work in the name of Jesus, and other neighbours are doing their missions according to their religious and ideological traditions.

Mission thus was redefined as God's continuing activity through the Spirit. Ariarajah also supported Samartha's views by quoting the Baar statements to affirm the fact that other religions were acting within God's providence, and that God also being present and active in and through them. He wrote: "We see the plurality of religious traditions as both the result of the manifold ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness and diversity of humankind... Where there is truth and wisdom in their

⁶¹ Nelson 1971:145

⁶² Samartha 1991:149

⁶³ Samartha 1991:149

⁶⁴ Samartha 1991:150

teachings, and love and holiness in their living, this like any wisdom, insight, knowledge, understanding, love and holiness that is found among us, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We also affirm that God is with them as they struggle, along with us, for justice and liberation.”

This Sri Lankan theologian wanted to express what was implicit in Samartha’s theology of mission, that in other religions the Holy Spirit is also working actively, as in Christianity. They have the same truth as Christianity. The Holy Spirit leads them to do good works and to share in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as in Christianity. This concept corresponds with the Vatican Declaration in *The Documents of Vatican II* concerning the relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, especially Muslims: “they can earn salvation, because their faith is also associated with Abraham’s faith and they worship God earnestly”.⁶⁵ Samartha’s theology of mission thus proved to follow a path that could open the debate between Rome and Reformation on crucial aspects of Christian theology.

However, it must be admitted simultaneously that in Evangelical circles the perception grew that both Samartha and Ariarajah’s definition of mission within WCC, has taken place at the cost of minimizing or even ignoring the verbal proclamation of the Gospel. It was to this suspicion that Stransky raised the question: “Does not the very fact of such dialogues dull the edge of Christian witness and lead even to *religious syncretism*”.⁶⁶

In the constructive part of this thesis an attempt will be made to find a mediating position in this debate, a position that will do justice to the vital new insights of Samartha and fellow ecumenical theologians and the age-old evangelical call to witnessing the good news of the Christian Gospel. Being from an evangelical background myself, I shall attempt to share with fellow-evangelicals genuine insights gained from grappling with the agendas of the wider ecumenical movement.

⁶⁵ Abbott 1966:663

⁶⁶ Stransky 1991:254

b) *Samartha's concept of 'Dialogue with people of other Living Faiths'*

Samartha insisted that dialogue is part of the living relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies, as they share in the life of the community.⁶⁷ Samartha's concept of Dialogue was based on concepts of his seniors and predecessors from Asia such as Devanandan and M.M. Thomas, and others.

The point which was emphasized by M.M. Thomas, one of Samartha's mentors and a big name in theology from India, was that the churches should be not so much concerned with religion or evangelism as with responding to the rapid social changes taking place in societies where millions of people were clamouring for social liberation rather than individual salvation. It means, first, that the relationship between Christians and non-Christians should be based not on religious differences but on the fact that people share a common humanity which is, by God's will, secular; second that the gospel is addressed to human beings, and not to religions.⁶⁸ For Samartha, 'Common humanity' is the starting point of Dialogue between Christians with their neighbours from other faiths, and this is the Christian mission, 'to witness' to others, not to evangelize or to proselytize them to Christianity. This is how Samartha coined the WCC concept of relationship between 'mission and dialogue'.

After the Fifth Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi (1975), Samartha wrote his book *Courage for dialogue*, to interpret the controversial debate that took place there. He asserted: "I am convinced that the obstacle to dialogue is not so much the absence of a theology of dialogue as a lack of courage to meet partners of others faiths and ideological convictions freely and openly in a climate of openness and freedom... It is the fear of losing one's identity, of being shaken in one's comfortable, traditional beliefs, of being confronted with and perhaps compelled to acknowledge the truth in another camp, of recognizing that the stranger at the gate might after all turn out to be a fellow pilgrim - these are the factors, often unconscious or hidden, that prevent many Christians and their

⁶⁷ Samartha 1981:1

⁶⁸ Samartha 1996:40

neighbours from moving out of a sterile coexistence to a more joyful cooperation with each other.”⁶⁹

Ariarajah also admitted that during the debate about ‘Inter-Faith Dialogue’ in the WCC, the Asian theologians always defended that interfaith dialogue was the most appropriate way for the church to live in a pluralistic world.”⁷⁰

By these statements, Samartha seemed to be saying that being a Christian or non-Christian was not so important in itself. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is also working within other religions and ideologies. So therefore, there is no need to evangelize the people of other living faiths, neither to transform any kind of tradition by the Gospel, but just to work together as needed within a common humanity. On the basis of this, the looming problem became quite obvious: that evangelism, as part of the church's mission, would soon be amputated.

The question that needs to be answered in this study therefore: Is *Samartha's concept of 'inter-faith dialogue', as approved, refined and implemented by the WCC, really the most appropriate solution and missionary approach to people of other living faiths?* We want to know how we should assess Samartha's concept of dialogue within the WCC, and relate it to Christian mission in a pluralistic context of Asia, and particularly in the contemporary Indonesian context.

c) *Samartha's six Tentative suggestions of Guidelines to 'Inter-Faith Dialogue' as developed within the WCC.*

After the WCC conference in Addis Ababa (1971), six principles as tentative suggestion to ‘Guideline of dialogue’ was published as so-called ‘interim guidelines’ in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* under the title: “The Progress and Promise of Inter-Religious Dialogue”.⁷¹ The six articles by Samartha were

⁶⁹ Samartha 1981: x-xi

⁷⁰ Lossky 1991: 285

⁷¹ Samartha 1996:81-82

initially called “Nature and Purpose of Dialogue”, but later they were developed into “Policy and Interim Guidelines for Dialogue”.

A critical analysis of these basic guidelines, which were then developed and implemented within the WCC over the next two decades, will form the crux of this study. For this the reader is referred to chapter 3 (see 3.4.1).

In 1979, the WCC Central Committee, after years of debate, accepted a set of guidelines for dialogue that has been recommended to the affiliated churches all over the world. The fact is that these guidelines can directly be related to Samartha's original six tentative suggestions.

1.5 Hypothesis

Samartha's concept of Christian dialogue with people of other faiths is not as relevant as in India for Christian mission in a Muslim context, in Indonesia. Important as it may be for inter-faith and inter-cultural peace and harmony, it has serious implications for Christian mission which become apparent in a different context, such as the Muslim world. The notion of inter-faith dialogue thus needs further refinement, which takes into consideration the witnessing impulses of prophetic religions such as Christianity and Islam.

1.6 Research Methodology

In taking Samartha's model of Interreligious Dialogue as focus of this study, I intend to present the research in two ways: firstly as a literature study (in conversation with the relevant literature), and secondly as a contextual study (in conversation with the relevant context). As Literature study, I intend to describe his missiological approach systematically without neglecting his theology of religions. This study mainly utilises library material, especially English sources including translations of some classical sources. The purpose of this analysis is to uncover Samartha's missiological approach, embedded in dialogue; it will also involve the historical background of the idea within the International

Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), as the ecumenical body where Samartha worked. The aim here is to investigate how that idea was developed before, during and after Samartha's intense involvement within the WCC.

The research design carried out in this study is both descriptive and evaluative of Samartha's approach, in order to find a new form of 'Inter-faith Dialogue' - in this case 'a contextual dialogue' for Indonesia today. In order to investigate the research problem stated above, the following logical steps will be required:

The *first step* will be to introduce *Samartha's biographical background and the origins of his theological concept*, and then to offer a brief survey on Mission and the idea of Dialogue, as originally developed within the International Missionary Council (IMC). How did "Evangelism", as part of Christian "Mission", turn into "Dialogue"? Why had the IMC to be integrated into the WCC in 1961? And how did this concept then change from a missionary vision to the mere notion of "common humanity" in the period that Samartha was involved within WCC (from 1968 to 1980).

To address the issues, I shall discuss the topic through literature study such as the work of Samartha (1996, 1991, and 1977) as primary resources, and other ecumenical experts such as Hallencreutz (1969), Kraemer (1969), Bosch (1987) and others as secondary resources, besides WCC publications related to Dialogue and Mission. The results of this survey will be documented in chapter 2 of this thesis.

As a *second step*, I shall 'unpack' *the WCC main statements on Dialogue*, following Samartha as key figure in these publications. I shall explore what Samartha was saying about 'how', 'why' and 'with whom' Christians should dialogue, through a careful analysis of "the Six tentative suggestions to dialogue", which became "Interim Guidelines of dialogue" in 1971, the Chiang Mai statement of 1977, and the Kingston Statement of 1979. I shall not seek to offer a detailed analysis of each statement, but rather finding and studying the

presence of Samartha's ideas in every statement, as they relate both explicitly or implicitly, to other Faiths. I shall explore how his idea 'the six tentative suggestions' influenced the 'Interim guidelines of Dialogue 1971, in Addis Ababa and eventually to the thirty points in the Kingston Statement 1979.

Three other Statements, about Dialogue with Muslims specifically will receive particular attention. They are the Birmingham Statement 3(1968), the Broumana Statement of 1972 and the Chambesy Statement of 1976. I would like to establish Samartha's specific views of Islam, and what he said about how Christians should relate to Muslims. The result of this survey and analysis will be documented in chapter 3 of this thesis.

As a *third step*, I shall *critically study Samartha's original concept of Inter-religious dialogue from a contemporary missionary perspective*. This will be followed up by investigating global attitudes towards Samartha's concepts of dialogue: from Christian and non-Christian perspectives, but also from other ideological perspectives. In this chapter, I shall also explore the opinions of other Asian theologians towards Samartha's work, both from Ecumenical and Evangelical perspectives, as related to current political and religious tensions in Asia, especially in the country where a Christian 'minority' was treated discriminatively, such as in Indonesia. His concept of "Inter-faith Dialogue" will be assessed, and whether the concept still fits in the Christian approach toward other religions today, after more than seventy years since the idea was implemented. At what level can the Christians agree to Samartha's concept of Dialogue with other faiths without betraying their commitment to Jesus' Great Commission? The result of this analysis will be documented in chapter 4 of this thesis.

As contextual study, in the *final step*, I shall explore various *alternative approaches to the relation between Christianity and other faiths*, such as those of Knitter, Küng, Bosch and De Gruchy, but also from other Conservative and Evangelical scholars, like Newbigin, Stott, Winter, Howard and others. With this exploration, I shall offer some *constructive comments, how to implement this concept in the Indonesian context*, both in mission and society, and especially in

Christian students' mission on campuses, even though religious tensions might remain an unresolved issue. This Chapter five will thus strive to work towards a new missionary concept and approach: a combination of dialogue and a faithful approach to Jesus' "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18-20. Finally, a constructive suggestion for countries that are predominantly non-Christian (such as the predominantly Muslim Indonesia) will be suggested.

In terms of the approach to the subject matter at hand the question can be asked: What is new in this dissertation?

As mentioned early on, I do not have any intention to repeat the whole history of Inter-faith Dialogue which was already done by so many authors such as Knitter, Panikkar, Ariarajah and many names from both the Ecumenical and Evangelical side, such as Arthur F. Glaeser in his critical evaluation on Samartha's work. This writing is neither to repeat what Klootwijk had compiled admirably about Samartha's work, on his openness and commitment towards other faiths. As a contextual study, this dissertation is specifically presenting an analysis of Samartha's concept of Christian dialogue with people of other faiths, and its implementation in Indonesia today within the context of a Muslim majority. How should Samartha's concept of 'dialogue' which was born in a Hindu context be assessed and implemented in the Indonesian context, which is theoretically based on the ideology of *Pancasila*, yet practically dominated by Islam, both socially and politically? How should Indonesian Christians dialogue with their Muslims neighbours without losing their missionary calling to make all nations to be Jesus' disciples?

1.7 Terminology

According to John Taylor, dialogue is a conversation between different groups of people who not only recognize the diversities between them, but also focus on the similarities or some commonalities they share. In this dialogue, both sides should be ready to listen to each other and respect the diversity.⁷² In this context, the kind of *dialogue* to be discussed here is only limited to conversation

between the different religions, particularly how Christians dialogue with the people of different faiths. Christian dialogue with other living faiths has been going through a long historical process until now it has become known as *'inter-faith dialogue'*.

In the beginning, the early ecumenical body of Christian churches discussed *the idea* of dialogue in the frame of *Christian missionary approach to other religions*, or to people of other faiths. Since 1968, the discussion was formulated in one phrase: *'Christian dialogue with people of other living faiths'* by Samartha. This notion became embodied in one Unit of the WCC program, where Samartha himself functioned as Director and promoter. Since the promotion of this Christian dialogue with many religions and ideologies in many parts of the world, the terminology was shortened to simply become *'interfaith dialogue'*. That is why in this thesis will be spoken about 'Christian dialogue with people of other living faith', and some other times about 'interfaith dialogue', but the idea remains the same.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

This study will investigate Stanley J. Samartha's concept of "dialogue between Christians and people of other Faiths" as developed within the WCC. What is the intention behind the focus on 'dialogue' and the implicit or explicit rejection of 'evangelism'? Why did his fellow Indian theologians Sunanda Sumithra and Ken Jnanakan criticise Samartha's pluralistic concept of dialogue as not biblical and as compromised, 'surrendering some of the essentials of biblical Christian faith, as well as denying the integrity of the Bible and the records of God's dealings with humankind'.⁷² Did Samartha's concept arise from political motivation, as a means to reducing the level of conflict and violence between Christians and people of other faiths?

In fact, after almost seventy years since the idea of dialogue gained the ascendancy on the WCC pulpit and in the world, interfaith conflict still stays an

⁷² Taylor 1979:373; cf. Sinaga 2003:38

⁷³ Jnanakan 1990:170

unresolved issue, even creating more tension presently, and thus remaining as one of the major problems in the world. Critical questions regarding the success of Inter-faith Dialogue as the only way of defining peace within the community can be asked: Where is the peace that Samarthan wanted to achieve through “inter-faith dialogue”? Did Samarthan want to ignore the implications of Jesus’ teaching about Evangelism/Mission - for the sake of “worldly peace” – something which almost never existed? What, in this context, is the meaning of Jesus’ words: “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved”? (NIV, Mat.10: 22).

The study therefore, will be limited to Samarthan’s concept of Christian mission, the relationship between mission and dialogue and how Christian dialogue with people of other faiths can be implemented in Indonesia, without touching too much on the details of his theology of God, Salvation and other Christian doctrines. For this goal, I shall ‘unpack’ the WCC main statements on Dialogue, following Samarthan as key figure in these publications. In this regard the study is also limited to the statements coming out of the various Conferences where Samarthan's influence could be traced, and in most cases this could not be traced to the final texts of the WCC Assemblies. Additionally, I shall offer some constructive comments, how to implement this concept in the Indonesian context, both in mission and society, and especially in Christian students’ mission on campuses, even though religious tensions might remain an unresolved issue.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIOGRAPHICAL AND ECUMENICAL CONTEXT OF SAMARTHA'S CONCEPT OF INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

Introduction

Samartha's concept of 'Christian dialogue with people of other Living Faiths', currently called 'Inter-Faith Dialogue' was born out of two main struggle contexts. The first was from his personal background as an Indian child who was brought up under the Pietist influence of the Basel Mission in Karnataka, South India, since 1920. The second context was his theological struggle since his personal encounter with the World Council of Churches (WCC), since 1968.

Before the WCC was founded in 1948, the Christian institution dealing with mission was called the International Missionary Council (IMC). This institution had its first conference in 1910 in Edinburgh, and the second meeting in Jerusalem, in 1928. The main agenda of the IMC was to discuss how evangelism should be run to be more effective in the non-Christian world. The non-Christian world in this context was actually rivers to 'other religions'. The third conference of the IMC was held in Tambaram, India, in 1938, where its members who came from Asia (specifically from India and Sri Lanka) contributed the very significant idea about a specific interpretation of 'Christian World' and 'non-Christian World'. For the Asians, using these terms such as 'Christian World' and 'non-Christian world' was expressing, or creating, a dichotomy between the people of various communities in the world.

This ecumenical context for Samartha's work will be limited to the period from 1910 until 1980, because the IMC's idea of mission towards the non-Christian world, and later specifically towards people of other religions, was discussed since 1910, and later-on personally embodied through Samartha's presence within the WCC until 1980. Discussion was developed intentionally, until 1961. The phrase 'mission to the non-Christian world' was developed transitionally into the idea of 'dialogue' at the combined conference of the IMC and the WCC

in New Delhi, India. The year 1961 was also very historical for both these ecumenical bodies, since the IMC was then integrated into the WCC. Seven years later, the concept of dialogue underwent some further changes in the WCC discussion at the Uppsala conference of 1968. It was at this time that Samartha started his theological contributions within the WCC, to refine the concept of 'Dialogue with People of other Religions', until he retired in 1980 and returned to India in 1981. His brief biographical background and the ecumenical historical research of the IMC and the WCC between 1910 and 1980 will be presented in this chapter as the context in which Samartha worked to develop his concept of 'dialogue with people of other living faiths' or, as it has since been called 'Inter-Faith Dialogue'.

2.1 Biographical Context: Samartha's life and work in India (1920-1968)

Samartha was born on 7 October 1920 as the son of a pastor of the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society. He grew up in the peaceful multi-religious society of Karnataka, in the South of India. It was not so clear what caste he came from. According to recent reports, the Indian government still, at the time, did not recognize Christians as belonging to India. As recent as 2007 Zene states that caste within Hinduism is still more dominant in the community than any other religion.⁷⁴

Samartha was brought up in a multi-religious society with little tension or conflict. His close friends in the primary school in the little village of Perdur were two Hindus and two Muslims. Samartha has kept in touch with them over the years, and visiting them again in the village during his travels back to India from Geneva.⁷⁵

Over the years Samartha has developed a very strong appreciation towards indigenous culture, even though the explicit recognition of this came later, after his visit to South Africa, when he organized a consultation on traditional

⁷⁴ Zene 2007:275 "Caste" is the hierarchical social system in Hinduism. Cf. Narayanan 2003:159

⁷⁵ Samartha 1996:4

religions in Africa. He wrote in his book *Between Two Cultures* about this new consciousness: “I recognize now what did not occur to us as children watching a dead body being burned in a dry paddy field in the village: that when the monsoon rains came, the ashes went into the ground to provide sustenance for the new crop next year. There were rituals to be followed, symbols to be displayed, pleasures to be enjoyed and sometimes denied, and a variety of enabling means to emphasize the continuity of life between the living and the dead. The whole village community accepted this.”⁷⁶ Samartha called this a belief system centred on “*the mystery of life and death*”, akin to Rudolph Otto’s concept of ‘*The Numinous*’. He seems not to have agreed with many Christians and Muslims who did not accept this concept of mystery of life and death. He blamed them for keeping themselves on the outside of this unifying cultural force.

By reading Mahatma Gandhi’s autobiography and about others heroes in Indian history, Samartha’s nationalism was strengthened. Learning from his childhood experience, he realized that to imitate “white people” would never cross his mind. His education background was mostly at Catholic school and the Government College in Mangalore.

He received his high school education in the Basel Evangelical Mission High School. He was reared in the Basel mission tradition and piety. He was a person who strove to cross the frontiers all his life, without alienating himself from his roots. He found himself in the intersection of cultures and religions. His self-understanding was that of being, unmistakably, an Indian and distinctively a Christian.

At the age of 21, he was accepted as theological student at the United Theological College in Bangalore. His theological thinking was initially shaped by this College, where he was a student from 1941 until 1945 under the influenced of P.D. Devanandan and Marcus Ward.⁷⁷ He received a good college education and soon became involved in the activities of the Student Christian

⁷⁶ Samartha 1996:5

⁷⁷ Jathananna 2008

Movement (SCM). He later by traced his inner confidence that “Christian life can be lived pluralistically” to the early influence of the SCM.⁷⁸ The training there was without the usual requirement of one or two years of practical work in the field. He completed his theological studies in 1945. He was impressed and attracted by the teaching and pastoral dimensions of the ministry, but he said “I distrust, even disliked, its ritual side”⁷⁹

His first degree was in Economics and History. During his study at College, he was active in student debates - both cultural and political debates. Unfortunately, he did not feel at ease in these debates, because the churches where he came from did not support any debate on politics. He even felt more awkward when the churches preached about the dangers of national independence, and, according to his insights, miss-interpreted Rom. 13:1-2 (obedience to ‘the authorities’).⁸⁰

During his third year at the University, he became Secretary of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and later became president of SCM. Based on his disappointment in the teaching of the churches, he then studied theology further through SCM, not necessarily for the ministry, but to find for himself “what the truth is”. He was so disturbed by the situation, where he found the Protestant churches in Mangalore so isolated and inferior – without any access at all to the government. He wrote: “We, as a small minority of Protestants in Mangalore, were so isolated geographically and spiritually that we had become introverted and suffered from a deep sense of inferiority. The fact that our missionaries were German and Swiss, who had no access to the government’s corridors of power who so familiar to British missionaries, further marginalized us.”⁸¹

In the SCM meetings, he met for the first time Christians of other traditions and other denominations. This encounter led him to understand more about ecumenical agendas and pluralism, because now he found other ways to

⁷⁸ Raiser 2008

⁷⁹ Samartha 1996:10

⁸⁰ Samartha 1996:9

⁸¹ Samartha 1986:9

worship God, not only one way like he used to practice at his home Protestant church.

After finishing his theological studies, he was appointed as assistant to the pastor in Udipi for two years. He, however, soon discovered that his intellectual interest was in Christian theology and the history and philosophy of religions. After a short period in the parish ministry and as a lecturer in the seminary of his own Church, he was given the opportunity to pursue graduate studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York under Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. He continued his doctoral study at the Hartford Seminary Foundation from where he later received his doctoral degree.

He finished his M.Th. at Union Theological Seminary in New York with his thesis *The Hindu view of History according to Radhakrishnan*, under Paul Tillich. His Doctoral study at the Hartford Seminary Foundation in Connecticut, took this investigation further under the title *The Hindu View of History According to Representative Thinkers*. Samartha's theological teachers were *inter alia* Paul David Devanandan, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, James Muilenberg, C.H. Dodd, Harold K. Moulton, Oscar Cullmann, and Karl Barth.

During his time in America, his mind was opened for the first time to recognize the theological ideas and aesthetic symbolism and meaning in Indian music (and instruments) when he met Malcolm Pitt, one of American retired missionary from North India. Samartha wrote:

“He and his wife deeply appreciated Indian culture, music and art. His house was full of Indian musical instruments, some of which he could play, and many works of art which I had never seen in India in Christian homes or institutions. This opened to me as never before the aesthetic dimension of faith, which has remained an interest and concern for me ever since”.⁸²

⁸² Samartha 1996:12

Before returning to India, he spent a term in Basel at the invitation of the Basel Mission, attending lectures and seminars of Karl Barth and meeting Hendrick Kraemer as director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. After his return to India in 1952, he was immediately appointed as Principal of the Basel Evangelical Mission Theological Seminary (now Karnataka Theological College) at Mangalore. He has found his vocation in the field of teaching and theological reflection which for him was a distinct form of ministry in the church.

Throughout his long academic career of teaching and writing, he remained a faithful presbyter of his church. He was convinced that intellectual theological reflection has an indispensable role in the life of the church. Learning from his ministry experience, he wrote his most provoking message in Indian context:

“The Critical function of Christian theologians in India and elsewhere is to speak and write courageously against uncritical conformity to tradition, emphasizing that devotion to Christ and discipleship of Jesus in the face of the striking changes taking place in contemporary history, demand changed attitudes on the part of Christians to their neighbors in the country and in the world. They need to raise new questions, suggest new answers and broaden the theological space for critical discussion in the freedom of the Spirit within the koinonia of the church.”⁸³ What he means by that will be analyzed further in chapter four, where his own critical contribution will be dealt with in detail.

2.2 The Influence of Earlier Ecumenical Conferences (1910-1961) on Samartha

The period of 1910-1961 was the time when the discussion around the topic of Christian Mission related to other religions, or the non-Christian, world took place. At this point in time, Samartha was not yet present, but what he wrote in his books years later was based on his research into the debates and reflected a record of what had happened, and how it happened, especially regarding the issues which later lead to ‘dialogue’ within the circles of the IMC and the WCC.

2.2.1 The Concept of mission at the Edinburgh conference, 1910

The conference of Edinburgh focused its attention on a strategically review of the whole mission field throughout the world. The Churches and 'the Missionary Enterprise' had to re-think what mission entails in the context of the changing World. This conference tried to answer the ecumenical need of Churches for working together in mission.

Siwu summarises eight main points from the discussion about the essence of mission at the Edinburgh conference. The first was carrying the gospel to the non-Christian world; the second: the Churches must do mission; the third: Christianization must take place through education in the nations; the forth: the great commission must be related to 'non-Christian' religions; the fifth: preparation for sending missionaries has to take place; the sixth: a sending base for evangelism has to be established; the seventh: the relationship between evangelism and the government needs attention; the eighth: partnership between churches and mission needs to be improved.⁸⁴ The central theme was "Carrying the Gospel to the entire non-Christian World".

Saayman, also quoting from Rouse and Neill, reported in his book *Unity and Mission*, that there are two important conclusions from Edinburgh 1910. One of them, affirmed by a majority of participants, is the idea to plant in each non-Christian nation one undivided Church of Christ as the aim of all missionary work.⁸⁵ He did not elaborate what the conference meant with "the undivided Church in non- Christian nations", but he did report that these issues created disagreement among some participants.

The non-Christian World was still understood as non-Western countries, which easily could be misunderstood to mean that converting non-Western countries to become Christian is the same as a process of westernization. This

⁸³ Raiser 2008

⁸⁴ Siwu 1996: 18-19

⁸⁵ Saayman: 1984:9 Cf. Rouse &Neill 1967:359

perception, slowly but surely, created tension and resentment within the circles of non-western Christian leaders.

The term 'non Christian World or non-Christian nations' raised some polemic about the question 'why evangelism is only seen as something happening to the non-Christian World?' It seemed as if the non-Christian world was spread out before the eye of faith as a world to be conquered. It was however, as Kraemer indicated, not only the eye of faith, but also 'the eye of the Westerner', who subconsciously lived in the conviction that he could dispose of the destiny of the world, because the absorption of the Eastern by the Western world appeared to become inevitable.⁸⁶

The second conclusion to which Saayman alludes was the recommendation to create a continuation committee which eventually became the IMC. The IMC was expected to function as bridge between church and mission, as facilitator and coordinator. Saayman wrote that "the establishment of the IMC created an organ to facilitate and co-ordinate mission and Church, but in itself also engendered further reflection about *Church, Unity and mission*".⁸⁷ It showed here that this ecumenical institution is expected to function not only as facilitator on mission but also to unite the churches.

The Edinburgh conference was known as the first Protestant Ecumenical conference in the twentieth century. David Bosch called this conference 'a milestone' in the history of missionary conferences which took place and found its climax at the Willingen conference in 1952 and the Ghana conference in 1958. Three years later, in New Delhi, the IMC was integrated into the WCC and thus lost its independent character.⁸⁸ The Edinburgh conference succeeded to agree on one thing: the establishment of one international mission organization which was then called "the International Missionary Council" (IMC), in 1921. Saayman explained that Edinburgh did not make much progress on the interrelationship between unity and mission. It nevertheless became evident in

⁸⁶ Kraemer 1969:36

⁸⁷ Saayman 1984:10

⁸⁸ Bosch 2006:2

the subsequent developments, that the Edinburgh conference had prepared the Church for the turbulent years which lay ahead, and inspired men ready for the ecumenical movement in later years.⁸⁹ The word 'turbulent' covers what Cardinal Suenens described as 'a subject of controversy' in the history of the ecumenical movement. He notes that disunity and division in the ecumenical world became more evident every time they discussed about Jesus' commission. He wrote: "There was no united front of Christian forces proclaiming Jesus Christ, but rather, a display of our quarrels and divisions".⁹⁰

2.2.2 The IMC concept of mission at the Jerusalem conference, 1928

The Jerusalem conference was the first one since the IMC was established in 1921. There were three main discussion points at the Jerusalem conference. The first: the relationship between Christian mission and indigenous culture, or the question how to relate to Asian traditions and cultures without falling into the trap of syncretism. The second: the problem of mission, industrialization and secularism, or the need for the Churches to take serious action towards secularism in the church. The third: the relationship between older churches and the younger churches, or the question whether it had become time for the new churches in Asia to be self-governing and self-propagating.⁹¹

One of the most important things to be noted from Jerusalem is that the older churches were asked to encourage and support the younger churches according to their ability when the younger churches are facing the challenging task of evangelising the non-Christian world.⁹² At this conference, the non-Christian world was still seen as an object of evangelism, but it was more subtly formulated, in terms of "relationship" with other religions, instead of "evangelising" other religions, as at Edinburgh. Kraemer said that the Jerusalem meeting operated in a quite different atmosphere. The faith in the cause of mission, as such, was as firm as ever. However, the mood was more

⁸⁹ Saayman 1884:10

⁹⁰ Suenens 1978:2

⁹¹ Siwu 1996:27-30

⁹² Saayman 1984:10

introspective and observant than strategic. The theme of the conference was “The Christian life and Message in Relation to non-Christian Systems”.⁹³

The Jerusalem Conference of 1928 realised that the world-wide missionary task could only be undertaken by the one universal Church. The relationship between older churches and the younger churches therefore, should be governed by the concept of *partnership*, a partnership in which all the experience and resources of the churches everywhere in the world would be pooled in the unfinished task of evangelism.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, as Saayman reports in his book, at that stage disunity still characterized the missionary effort rather than partnership.⁹⁵

The conclusion of the Jerusalem Conference was that both the Western Churches (as older churches in the partnership) and the Asian churches (as younger members of the ecumenical Church family) had to work together in developing a balanced missionary approach. Mission was recognised as not only the work of the older churches, but also as a task of the younger churches. The older churches had to support the younger churches both financially and socially; on the other hand, the younger churches had to inspire the older churches with innovative ideas about new methods of evangelism in their areas.

At the Jerusalem conference, mission was no longer understood as only evangelism to the non-Christian world, to extend the ‘Christian empire’, but the Christian relationship with other religions and social responsibilities were also part of the agenda. The Jerusalem conference seemingly had a more positive affirmation of other faiths, which created dissatisfaction for some participants, as Ariarajah states: ‘Some participants could not agree with Jerusalem’s positive affirmation of other faiths’.⁹⁶ This dispute had to await a solution at the following conference, at Tambaram.

⁹³ Kraemer 1969:36

⁹⁴ Saayman 1984:10

⁹⁵ Saayman 1984:10

⁹⁶ Ariarajah 1991: 282

2.2.3 The IMC concept of mission and dialogue at Tambaram, 1938

Prominent at Tambaram was a sharp impression that the world was divided into two halves: one was the Christian world which was understood as western countries, and the other one was the non-Christian world which was understood as gentile, and consisting of mostly African and Asian countries. Evangelism as part of mission was understood as Western countries bringing the gospel to non-western countries, and converting those people to have a new religion, 'Christianity', and embracing a new culture, 'Western Culture.' This proselytism was called 'Christian mission'. This mission for IMC however, was very important, and was seen as the expression of obedience to Jesus' great commission. Other religions, apart from Christianity, according to IMC understanding, was only religions of darkness, Occultism and the work of the devil, that needed to be converted to Christianity.⁹⁷

The IMC conference in Tambaram 1938, therefore, brought much tension among the members, especially between European Christian leaders and Asian Christian leaders. For the Asians, like D.G. Moses, P.D. Devanandan and M.M. Thomas from India, and S. Kulendran and D.T. Niles from Sri Lanka, the concept of a divided world between the Christian world and non-Christian World, marked a dichotomy between people who are neighbours. And yet, using this concept as a framework for Mission was in fact creating a new prison, 'a missiological prison'.⁹⁸ Asian Christian leaders meant by that, that the IMC had put themselves into the 'box of missiology', that forced them to work hard to replace other existing religions in Asia with Christianity. The idea behind this concept of mission was that only through Christianity the Asian could be a true worshipper of God in the world. In other words, other religions have no right to exist in the world and to enjoy the same world, created by the same God.⁹⁹

To continue this debate, the Conference decided to choose a committee to make a further study about 'the relation between the Gospel and the non-

⁹⁷ Ariarajah 1999:114

⁹⁸ Samartha 1996:38

⁹⁹ Samartha 1996:39

Christian world'. M.M. Thomas from India was appointed as chairman and H.B. Partin as secretary to guide the study. Samartha quoted Partin who said that "there was a tension within the study committee between those who were seeking a *theological statement* clarifying the relationship between the Gospel and religions, and those whose main concern was with the *communication* of the gospel to 'the non-Christian'."¹⁰⁰ This tension was called by Ariarajah "*the unresolved tension*".¹⁰¹ Cardinal Suenens made a sarcastic statement about disunity as "the scandal of division", hindering the visible unity of Christians. He admitted nevertheless, that this congress had made some important progress since the 1910 meeting at Edinburgh. The Tambaram conference laid the foundation for further progress that followed at the congresses at Amsterdam (1948), Evanston (1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968) and Nairobi (1975). He specifically underlined the Amsterdam Council (1948) that gave birth to the World Council of Churches (WCC)¹⁰².

2.2.4 The IMC concept of mission and the idea of dialogue at the Whitby conference, 1947

The Whitby conference in Canada was probably the most memorable in the WCC history. I deal with this event in a separate paragraph; even though there was no explicit discussion about "dialogue," but the focus at this conference was on mission. The main issues discussed at this conference were about the churches' situation after the Second World War. One of the most important points from this conference was that the churches in Asia expressed the same need for one ecumenical body, and the need of "working together" in partnership. Another point was that evangelism had to be a priority task of the church. From the discussion of the need for one ecumenical organization resulted the planning for establishing the World Council of Churches (WCC), which became a reality in 1948, at the meeting in Amsterdam. The IMC concept of mission became central to an understanding of the church itself. Siwu quoted David Bosch, who called this event a transition from "Church-centric and

¹⁰⁰ Samartha 1996:39

¹⁰¹ Ariarajah 1999:108

¹⁰² Suenens 1978: 2

society-centric mission” to “mission-centric church”.¹⁰³ In other words, the essence of the apostolic church was mission, and nothing else. This vision was still emphasized in Amsterdam in 1948 as the WCC vision, at the time of the establishment of the WCC.

2.2.5 The WCC concept of mission and the idea of dialogue at the Willingen conference, 1952

The Willingen conference was very historical for the WCC, because this was the first conference organised by the IMC since the WCC was established in 1948 in Amsterdam. The atmosphere of this conference was quite different compared to what happened at Whitby in Ontario, Canada, in 1947. All the participants in the Willingen conference were seemingly ready for the spirit of ecumenism. The main theme of the conference was “The Missionary obligation of The Church”.¹⁰⁴

This conference re-examined the theological foundation of missionary work since Tambaram. They eventually came to a new understanding that mission is not church’s mission or church-centric mission which implicitly is seen as Western Churches’ mission. Under Max Warren’s paper ‘The Christian Mission and the Cross’, this theme was discussed extensively, and it became increasingly clear that the starting point for a theology of mission was not to be found in the Church, but in God himself. Mission should not be based on ecclesiology but on Christology. Mission belongs to God and is God’s mission, which was called by Hartenstein ‘missio Dei’ (God’s mission), emphasising that God, and God alone, was the subject of mission. Only in God’s hands our mission could be truly called mission.¹⁰⁵ In the period after Willingen, Bosch said that the concept of ‘missio Dei’ gradually changed its meaning to signify God’s hidden activities in the world.¹⁰⁶ Mission was then understood as not only focusing on the Churches’ activities, but rather God’s activities. Mission was

¹⁰³ Siwu 1996:47-48 Cf. Bosch: 1980:176

¹⁰⁴ Siwu 1996:52, Bosch 2006:179

¹⁰⁵ Bosch 2006:179 Cf. Bosch (1991:390) and Van’t Hof (1972:158)

¹⁰⁶ Bosch 2006:180

derived from the very nature of God.¹⁰⁷ It means mission has to be understood from God side, God's salvific works in human history. God himself was working in His full existence as Trinity.

After the Willingen Conference, the *Missio Dei* concept gradually underwent a modification. Since God's concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope of the *Missio Dei*. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. "God's own mission is larger than the mission of the church".¹⁰⁸ The *Missio Dei* is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate.¹⁰⁹ His Trinitarian presence in world history was understood by the Willingen conference as foundation of missionary work.

On the other side, as mission is no longer viewed as "church-centric", but *Missio Dei*, so therefore, the old churches (Western Churches) were also understood not only as givers, and the young churches (from the two-thirds world countries) not only as recipients. In *Missio Dei*, God came into the World – into humanity. It means, God calls humanity to come to Him, not to come into the Church. This was a new concept of mission within WCC since its first conference in 1952.

The Willingen conference inspired all Asians and Africans who attended the conference to understand their context better. They started to pay attention to the social, cultural, political ideology, the original cultures and religions in their regions. They had to find new mission strategies for the Churches to answer all questions in the context where they are, not thinking of strategy to convert the culture into Christianity, but to find out "how God was present in each culture and religion".¹¹⁰ Because of the need of strategy to know other faiths better, and how it related to the Bible, in 1955, the IMC started with a new program "to study The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men".

¹⁰⁷ Bosch 1991:390

¹⁰⁸ Bosch 1991:391 Cf. LWF (1988:8)

¹⁰⁹ Bosch 1991:391)

¹¹⁰ Siwu 1996:52-53

2.2.6 The IMC and the WCC concept of mission and the idea of dialogue at the New Delhi conference, 1961.

The conference in New Delhi was the climax and the most important event in the joint history of the IMC and the WCC, because this was the first time when these two World Christian organizations had a combined conference and achieved a landmark chapter in their history. In 1961, the IMC was merged with the WCC. It is important to note, as Cardinal Suenens emphasized, that the World Council of Churches (WCC) in no sense claims to be a universal super-Church. Its aims are to reunite all Christians in their triple and common vocation: witness (martyria), unity (koinonia), and service (diakonia). At the conference in New Delhi (1961), the definition of what the WCC is, was worded as follows: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit".¹¹¹

The main reason for this integration was, first, the challenge of Asian and African nationalism. The second reason was the problem, which Asian and African Churches were facing, such as the relationship between church and state in Asia. The third was the need of one organisation that is embracing both mission and ecumenism. At the New Delhi conference they realised that the Church's witness and its unity can not be separated from one another, as part of the holistic task of the Church, as one body of Christ in the world. The integration process was not that easy. The interrelationship between two ecumenical bodies was deeply debated, especially the proper place of mission, as this was also close to the heart of the ecumenical movement.¹¹²

A strong group of IMC, consisting mostly of missionary enterprises, were not so much in favour of such new plan, as their main priority was to evangelise the world, especially the non-Christian world. On the other hand, since the WCC was a council of churches, some member thought it should prioritise the unity of

¹¹¹ Suenens 1978: 2

¹¹² Saayman 1984: 21

its members instead of adding a new burden with ideas about mission from IMC. There was also a problematic process with the representatives from Orthodox Church. They did not agree if IMC integrate with WCC. The Orthodox Churches generally viewed the modern missionary movement (with IMC as a driving force) with suspicion, they saw them "as aggressive expression of a Protestantism which was fundamentally heretical and dangerous..."¹¹³ Yet, at the end of the assembly, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), as a new department in the WCC to continue the work of IMC since it was integrated within the WCC, promised new obedience to the Lord of the Church who call them to *unity and mission*.

Saayman quoted McCavert's evaluation of New Delhi 1961 about the statement of integration: "Integration must mean that the World Council of Churches takes the missionary task into the very heart of its life, and that the missionary agencies of the churches place their work in an ecumenical perspective and accept whatever new insights God may give through new relationship".¹¹⁴ The first point emphasised in this statement is that missionary agencies must be in line with the WCC and the second is to accept whatever new insights God may give through the new relationship. It means that the past concept of mission within the IMC must be open to be re-examined theologically and socially by WCC.

This conference was decisively shaped by the Willingen conference in terms of the definition of mission, which was theologically strongly influenced by Hoekendijk. Hoekendijk's exposition of the theology of the apostolate, the so-called *missio Dei*, forcefully influenced both Willingen and New Delhi. In *Missio Dei*, mission is from God to the world. The church is not the centre, but the world included the world history. Hoekendijk here emphasised that the church was a function of mission. He reacted strongly against the institutionalisation of the 'Church', making the church just another institution along with others. This concept had a strong impact on the contemporary theology of God's mission. To him, the mission focus is the World, not the church as institution.

¹¹³ Saayman 1984:26

¹¹⁴ Saayman 1984:26

David Bosch explained this view in such terms that the Church as people of God could not be bound by human or institutionalized forms of the existing world. In Hoekendijk's view such a view of the church was tantamount to imprisoning the Holy Spirit¹¹⁵.

On the implication of this new concept in salvation history, Saayman comments: "missio Dei concerned God's offer of shalom to the whole creation, and was by no means to be domesticated in the Church".¹¹⁶ This means that salvation has already been brought by Christ to the whole creation, His light already fell upon all the world, which makes Him the light for the world.

Based on Colossians 1:15-20, Sittler, one of the participants from Eastern Orthodox churches at New Delhi, emphasised the relationship between Christ and creation. He said that creation and redemption may never be divorced from each other.¹¹⁷ In relationship to the Kingdom of Christ, there exists an undivorced relationship between creation and redemption. Sittler wants to say that the whole world is the kingdom of Christ, and the world history is the history of the Kingdom of Christ. He called this '*cosmic king Christ*'.¹¹⁸ Both Hoekendijk and Sittler are actually saying the same thing from a different angle. The first one speaks from a missiological perspective and the other one from a theological perspective - the theology of the kingdom of God.

Because Christ's kingdom already exist in the whole world, the missionary task of the church according to Sittler, is to join with God to set man free from all "principalities and powers" which prevented him from realising his full potential under the cosmic king Christ. The Church in her missionary work encourages people to put their faith in action, especially in socio-political action.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Bosch 2006:177-180

¹¹⁶ Saayman 1984:23

¹¹⁷ Saayman 1984:23

¹¹⁸ Cf. Saayman 1984:23-25

¹¹⁹ Saayman 1984:25

The significant change in New Delhi 1961 which needs to be taken note of was the changing of the idea of Mission towards other religions: from an accent on "witness" to other religions, to "dialogue" with people of other Faiths. The world history and salvation history were seen as working together and very close to each other. No more distinction was made between church and the world.

Lesslie Newbigin, nevertheless, did not agree with Hoekendijk: for him, the church as representative of God is the subject of Mission. Kraemer agreed with this view that the Church is a centre of Mission (Church-centred mission). Yet, at that stage the WCC seemingly agreed with Hoekendijk more than the others.

2.3 The influence of pre-1968 ideas about mission and dialogue on Samartha

The tensions between the Western and Asian views about mission, particularly 'evangelism' towards people of other faiths in the Asian region, affected Samartha's thinking very much. He was trying to find an appropriate Christian approach towards people of other faiths without demolishing the Asian cultural context, while simultaneously avoiding the trap of syncretism. His critical study of the early ecumenical documents about the development of various Christian missionary approaches towards non-Christians in Asia was inspiring him to engage more deeply with both the work of the WCC and the reality of pluralism in the Indian context.

2.3.1 The early development of the concept of inter-faith dialogue within the ecumenical world

The idea of "inter-faith dialogue" came sharply to the forefront within WCC since 1950 although the idea itself already existed and was in dispute since the 1938 Tambaram conference. The primary terms of reference, before finding alternative designations, was "the Word of God and the living faiths of men". The strong need for Asian theologians to reconsider the Christian mission approach to adherents of other religions motivated the conference to find the

proper formula. Devanandan, Samartha's teacher,¹²⁰ was one of those who realized this need. The Christian attitudes to men of other faiths have become a new challenge for the WCC.

In the discussion of “the word of God and the Living faiths”, two things were realised: On the one hand, this terminology reflected the tension between the Christian messages (gospel) to other religions’ messages, and the other is the relationship between Christians and non-Christians. The first is about ‘tension’ between Christianity and other religions, and the second is tension between Christians and other religious groups: how to avoid the missionary confrontation between religious man in his factual existential commitments and not merely his general religious framework.¹²¹ Samartha reported that the tension during debating the word of God and the Living faiths lead to no development.¹²²

While the study committee was still in their frustration discussing the topic since Tambaran 1938, MM Thomas from India raised another concern: ‘the relationship between religious beliefs and social change’. As the discussion was continuing about the problem of the Christian missionary approach towards people of other faiths, the dialectical relationship between religions became more dominant than the missionary approach. Christianity as religion was expected to recognise other religions as "sacred reality", on par with Christianity. At the same time, the differences between Christianity and other religions must also be recognized, because of the differences in religious traditions.

In regard to the relation between the missionary approach and the social problems, the men of other faiths must also be recognised by Christians and treated as partners working together, while simultaneously the differences due to different religious affiliations should be admitted. How these two different aspects were to be combined, was not an easy discussion, until one day in 1968, Samartha who was then responsible for Inter-religious relations at the

¹²⁰ Samartha: 1996:17

¹²¹ Hallencreutz 1969:16

¹²² Samartha 1996:39

sub-unit for Dialogue in the WCC, proposed "Dialogue with People of Living Faiths".¹²³ Samartha however did not give a very clear definition of the "Dialogue" he proposed, but he was seemingly referring to his background and experience as professor in Indian philosophy, in which he had been deeply involved with different cultures and religions in India, and had many contacts with men and women from the different religions.¹²⁴

During the process of coining the term "Dialogue with people of Living Faiths", the two phrases "The Word of God" and "The Living faiths of men", were understood in terms of Devanandan's address in New Delhi (1961): that God created peace in and through Christ; God had reconciled humankind to Him through Christ, so that humankind can have peace and be reconciled to each other. It means, that the Word of God, as it was revealed in and through Jesus Christ and written in the Bible, must be proclaimed to all people of other faiths, but that simultaneously Christians and non-Christians had to find the way to dialogue, working together to solve the human problems they were jointly facing.

On the process of formulating inter-faith dialogue, Hallencreutz comments that the real issue here is not about betraying mission or displacing other religions; it is about the way in which 'mission' is understood in the context of Christians living in dialogue with "men of others faiths".¹²⁵ This was the early development of the concept of inter-faith dialogue. This original concept did not exclude proclaiming the good news or Gospel, even though 'evangelism' has changed to 'witness'; to witness to men of other faiths, because the uniqueness and the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ. It implicitly means that through dialogue with men of other faiths, to witness about God's work through Jesus Christ can still be done.

2.3.2 The missionary vision since 1961: from 'witness' to 'dialogue'

When the IMC was still a main facilitator on mission, as it was since 1921, the missionary vision was still clear and focused on the un-evangelized world as a

¹²³ Samartha 1996:21

¹²⁴ Samartha 1996: 19-20

¹²⁵ Hallencreutz 1969:12

priority task: from the Christian world to the non-Christian world. Unfortunately, this historically precious vision was contaminated by the image of colonialism, until the Second World War, since which time missionary work conveyed the image of "imperialism" by Western Countries vis-à-vis non-Western countries. Evangelism, which became identical with Christianization, now also became identical with westernization. In these political processes in which Asian people became engaged, Asian nationalism became more important than the message of the Gospel itself. Thus, nationalism and pluralism in Asia became a priority agenda of the WCC to re-think and re-examine its vision of evangelizing the world.¹²⁶

In the New Delhi conference of 1961, two important "truths" relating to other religions were recognized: "The first, that the relationship between Christians and non-Christians is based upon the sharing of a common humanity and on an equal place within the Love of God. It is a human relationship, founded not upon some meeting point of religious systems, but on the shared experience of secular community. The second was that the Gospel is addressed not to religions but to men and women of other Faiths".¹²⁷

Devanandan, a most influential Indian theologian, addressed the strong message at the third Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi 1961, that conveying the message of "hope" and "peace" in Jesus Christ is the Church's main task in missionary witness. Hallencreutz quotes him:

"Our task in missionary witness is necessarily of the nature of proclaiming this message of hope in our Lord, the communication of the Good News to be widely broadcast that in Jesus Christ God is reconciling the world to Himself. In Jesus Christ, peace is made between God and man, so that man is restored to his rightful place in God's creation as God's confidant and companion; peace is secured between man and his neighbor so that mankind, saved from divisive self-destruction, discover the secret fellowship in true community; peace is created so that being freed from inner self-conflict, man recovers that wholeness of personality which is the very image of the Person of God".¹²⁸

¹²⁶ BR RO Believe 2008 (website)

¹²⁷ WCC 1961: 64

¹²⁸ Hallencreutz 1969:58

Devanandan, in this important speech, did not mention "other faiths" at all, but he emphasized "peace between man and his neighbours, and reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ". He seems to have had no intension to shift towards 'dialogue' or to promote 'inter-faith dialogue', as Samartha later developed. He simply reminded his audience about the nature of proclaiming the message, the communication of the Good News, as the goal of 'witness'.

Both Devanandan as Asian, and Kraemer as European missionary, who was working in Asia at the time, shared the same theological view about 'being reconciled to God is only by and through Christ', but they had emphatic differences about approaches to the inter-religious problem. Devanandan strongly emphasized the necessity to re-evaluate the western attitudes towards other religions in Asia, and to re-define mission in the context of pluralism. Kraemer on the other hand, emphasized mission through the church's witness to discontinue other religions, as they had been fulfilled by Christ.

Since the IMC integrated with the WCC, Asian theologians were more active and played a big role within the worldwide missionary movement in the WCC. They were present in many WCC conferences, such as in Mexico City (1963), Bangkok (1973), and Melbourne (1980), to voice the same message that the Christians need to re-evaluate their own earlier attitudes toward other faiths.¹²⁹

In the Mexico City conference of 1963 it was again re-emphasized what had been discussed in New Delhi in 1961 about *Missio Dei*: that mission is not the Church's mission but God's mission. The Church was only called to participate in God's mission. God is not only God of the creation, but also the God of world history. It means that God's saving work in the world is not only inside the Church, but also intertwined with the history of mankind.

From the main theme in Mexico City: "God's mission and our task", there were four points that Christians need to reflect on: first, Christian witness towards men of other faiths, secondly Christian witness towards secularism; thirdly

Christian witness towards the environment, and lastly, Christian witness beyond boundaries of nationalism and religion.¹³⁰

Christian witness here means both verbal message and message through deeds. Unfortunately, this vision had been changed from 'evangelism spirit within IMC' to only 'to witness to men of other faiths by the church' since 1961, and later then changed to 'dialogue' with people of other living faiths. This change according to David Bosch was mainly because of the influence of Joseph Sittler's paper at the New Delhi assembly about 'the Cosmic Christ' which was based on Col.1:15-20. He pleaded for a much closer relationship between creation and redemption. The outcome of this interpretation was that God was regarded as being active in every facet of world history. This paper held special significance for the superseding theology of religions, and 'dialogue' would soon be a key word in the theology of mission.¹³¹

Other developments, also significant to be added here, came from the conference in Bangkok (1964). At this conference the debate was about rethinking Christianity in Asia in relation to other faiths. Under the theme "Christian encounter with men of other beliefs", the debate involved many points including Tambaram's controversy.¹³²

The climax of the development to be mentioned here is the atmosphere of the WCC conference at Kandy, Sri Lanka, in 1967. At this conference, for the first time, serious interest was shown in interfaith dialogue within the WCC by the western participants, and also for the first time the Vatican Secretariat for the Non-Christian World became involved in the discussion.¹³³ The domain of Barth and Kraemer's theology in Protestant teaching was re-examined for the Asian context. This development, somehow, was very influential in Samartha's continuing journey.

¹²⁹ Scherer and Bevans 1992: ix Cf. Siwu 1996:142

¹³⁰ Siwu 1996:143

¹³¹ Bosch 2006:188

¹³² Ariarajah 1991:284

¹³³ Ariarajah 1991:284

2.3.3 The social challenges and the initial phases of dialogue after 1961

The social challenge that will be discussed here is the challenge of 'the concept of dialogue' as it developed after 1961, which apparently motivated Samartha to influence WCC more seriously to reconsider their view towards other faiths, since his initial involvement in 1968.

In the previous development of the concept of dialogue, as mentioned above, the original goal of the discussion was to find the right method to communicate the Gospel in a multi-cultural context. It means there was still space for Christians to share 'the word of God' to others, by witnessing what God had done through and in Jesus Christ, as Devanandan did in his speech: 'peace and reconciliation to God in and through Jesus Christ'.

Currently, however, the Christian *attitude* towards people of other religions is the main issue in the missionary debate. The question of Christians needing 'dialogue' is not about the messages of Jesus Christ itself, but about the method of communication. So therefore, through Samartha's intervention, 'dialogue' was considered as the right *method*, and the word 'evangelism' was replaced with 'witness' (after 1961), and then by 'dialogue' (since 1968). Interestingly, after Samartha retired in 1981, the WCC issued a statement 'Mission and Evangelism' in 1982, as an ecumenical affirmation to reflect the official position of WCC. The terminology swung back to 'evangelism' but the meaning remained close to 'social change', which related to common social and humanist goals, instead of proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers. The return to the use of the word 'evangelism' by WCC was well received by many Evangelicals, including in the circles of the Lausanne Movement. The question is: why was the word 'evangelism', which Samartha had already 'dismissed', used again by WCC after the former director of the Unit of Dialogue in the WCC left the office? This issue will not be investigated here further, since this thesis focuses only on a discussion of Samartha's view on dialogue during his period of office in the WCC - till 1980.

The fact was that the concept of evangelism had moved in another direction

since 1968, from 'witness to dialogue', from 'reconciliation in Christ only to common human concern'. The reason was that the definition of dialogue itself was not yet clear enough, even in the mind of its founder Samartha. There was a desire in some circles to steer that dialogue back to an honest confrontation between adherents of different religions, where the participants meet and challenge each other testifying to the depth of their own experience within their own religions. The implication for Hallencreutz was a new synthesis in which Christians were challenged to listen and to understand the partner of another faith. The emphasis here, as Hallencreutz pointed out, was 'mutual understanding' and 'sharing' in the inter-religious confrontation, but also implied an element of evaluation of truth claims and religious symbolism.¹³⁴

In Asia, the particular issue which determined the direction the notion of dialogue should follow became 'national identity'. Post-colonialism attracted the Asian people to focus attention on their national identity. The problems of nation building, including the cohesion that religion as part of a shared culture provided, were taken into account as part of 'national identity'. Nation building has become a comprehensive concept. Newly independent states have to face the task of shaping the new nation into a functioning community, economically, politically and administratively, but also of facing the ideological question of developing a national ethos.

At the same time, the process of nation building and increasing internationalization offered Christians in new nations fresh responsibilities and calls for new relationships to adherents of other religions. Although they did not limit their Christian commitments to nationalistic interests, somehow, this nationalism was leading them to plead for a renewed discussion of the Christian attitude to men of other faiths. Because of those new challenges and social problems around the communities, the new direction of *dialogue* was taken, transcending the well-known bipolarity of "The Word of God" and "The men of other living Faiths". This new challenge drove the concept of dialogue in a new direction, deviating from 'church mission' as understood in terms of reconciling

¹³⁴ Hallencreutz 1969:17

men to God in Jesus Christ, and emphasizing 'sharing common concerns' within dialogue.

2.4 Samartha and the Ecumenical Conferences, 1968-1980

The Conferences that will be discussed here are the WCC assemblies and the meetings which WCC sponsored since Uppsala 1968, focusing on Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths. It was during these conferences that Samartha entered the scene and became the main figure in this agenda.

At the New Delhi conference in 1961 it was decided to change 'evangelism' to 'witness' in relation to people of other faiths. The idea of 'dialogue' here was still wrapped in the term 'witness'. At this stage, sharing your faith in Jesus with your neighbors, through word and deed, was still possible, but since Uppsala 1968, everything changed. (This matter will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3 where we deal with Samartha's new hermeneutic). The concept of witness was totally transformed into dialogue. Dialogue became an obligation for Christians towards their neighbours from other faiths. This term is no longer understood in the sense as 'to witness' but merely 'sharing of a common humanity.' At Uppsala (1968), and since Uppsala, mission was largely regarded as humanization.¹³⁵

2.4.1 The Uppsala conference in 1968: dialogue as a continuing Christian obligation

There were four issues related to Christian Faith and Witness which were emphasized at the Uppsala conference: firstly, the common expression of faith; secondly, proclamation of the Gospel; thirdly, the church in the World, and fourthly, the unity of Mankind. At this occasion, the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies has sought to respond to the questions on 'how the Christian faith needs to be advanced in dialogue'.¹³⁶ By this

¹³⁵ Bosch 2006: 190

¹³⁶ Johnson 1975:70

statement, the WCC via the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) wanted to emphasize that *dialogue* within the new concept is compulsory for Christians affiliated to WCC.¹³⁷ Johnson further insisted, "Since Uppsala, it has no longer been confined to the particular sphere of mission. It has become one of the main concerns of the ecumenical movement and is recognized as a continuing Christian obligation in a world of various faiths, cultures and ideologies."

Theologically, the Uppsala conference brought a new direction to Dialogue. The main concern is no longer 'The Gospel and Non-Christian Religions', and neither 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men'. It is now 'Dialogue (sharing of common humanity) with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies'. Saayman admits that when Uppsala openly adopted humanisation as the goal of the world mission of the church, the result was a tremendous controversy. To some extent, this controversy was sparked by the perception that humanism now determined the goal of the world mission of the church, yet he quickly corrected, that this was not meant as the aim of the ecumenical movement.¹³⁸

In this new formulation the description of 'the others' as 'non-Christian' is avoided. It means the main concern is not with religions or ideologies as systems, but with people. Christians as people dialogue with people as partners. Indeed, we recognize that others, non-Christians, also have their responses to the mystery of human existence. According to the Uppsala understanding, this new concept is more open to others but not less committed to Christ. It is less aggressive and more humble. These new approaches reflect theological virtues, not opportunistic attitudes.¹³⁹

David Bosch further observed that all attention at the Uppsala assembly was focused on God's work in the secular world; the Church was relativised to such an extent that it could be said that 'the church does not have a separate mission of its own'. Mission was still described - as has happened in Willingen - as *Missio Dei*, but this now meant 'entering into partnership with God in history', 'understanding the changes in history in the perspective of the mission of God',

¹³⁷ Johnson 1975: 98

¹³⁸ Saayman 1984:41

and 'pointing to God at work in world history, pointing to the humanity in Christ as the goal of mission'. Everything became mission at Uppsala: health and welfare services, youth projects, work with political interest groups, constructive use of violence, the protection of human rights.¹⁴⁰

From what Bosch had described above, it is clear that the concept of mission since Uppsala was totally changed from its original meaning within IMC and the early Churches. Common human concerns have become the focus of various 'missions' where the Churches could work together with God in history, and with other people within 'dialogue'. Now, God was taken down by the human being and became a partner to work for humanity, for human satisfaction. This seems to directly contradict the Bible's version that God came down to the earth to become a Man (human being) to save human beings, and to reconcile human beings with Him.

Interpreting the spirit of Uppsala (1968), Johnson quoted Hallencreutz' description about what dialogue is:

"In dialogue we share our common humanity, its dignity and falseness, and express our common concern, for that humanity. It opens the possibility of sharing in new forms of community and common service. Each meets and challenges the other; witnessing from the depths of his existence to the ultimate concerns that come to expression in word and action. As Christians we believe that Christ speaks in this dialogue, revealing himself to those who do not know him and (correcting) the limited and distorted knowledge of those who do".¹⁴¹

In proclaiming the Gospel, the sub-unit of dialogue also emphasized, that dialogue "is an essential part in keeping our proclamation from an attitude of superiority towards our neighbors and helps to clarify the promises and demands of the Gospel. In all of this, the message of the cross and the

¹³⁹ Johnson 1975: 98

¹⁴⁰ Bosch 2006:190

¹⁴¹ Johnson 1975:99

resurrection emerges as relevant to the human predicament".¹⁴²

For the unity of humankind, the Uppsala Conference also underlined that the churches must work together with other religions for international, political and social justice. In line with this new emphasis, therefore, also the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) "has been concerned about the extent to which the missionary imperative could avoid being a disruptive factor in the search for the unity".¹⁴³ The unity between the Christians and the unbelievers became a main focus in dialogue since Uppsala.

Several factors which have contributed to dialogue since the WCC Assembly at Uppsala are mentioned by Johnson:¹⁴⁴

(a) The involvement of Christians with people of living faiths and ideologies not only in Asia and Africa but also in other continents. The number of people of other faiths in Europe and the Americas has increased in recent years. This calls for new relationships and for a theological reconsideration of former attitudes.

(b) The insights gained in national contexts through the work of Christian Study Centers, particularly since New Delhi (1961).

(c) The gradual recognition that dialogue is not a separate interest but touches other ecumenical concerns as well, such as unity, mission, development, education, human rights, technology and the future of man. What we do *with* others matters as much as what we seek to do *for* them.

(d) The experience of actual dialogue in the international context, theological reflection on them and mutual sharing of the lessons between Christians and people of other faiths. Supporting all this is our faith in the living God, in Jesus Christ, as the Lord of history including contemporary history, and in the Holy Spirit, who is active at all times, leading people into fullness of truth and abundant life.

(e) Dialogue has become a mainstream activity on the ecumenical agenda. Johnson asserts: "It should be obvious that since Uppsala considerable

¹⁴² Johnson 1975:70

¹⁴³ Johnson 1975: 71

¹⁴⁴ Johnson 1975:105

changes have taken place in the area of dialogue. But many churches have yet to reflect these changes in their life and witness. Dialogue is no longer just the hobby of a few in faraway places but an ecumenical concern embracing the whole inhabited earth".¹⁴⁵

Various Christian-Muslim dialogues have been going on at both local and international levels. There are also some new developments, since Uppsala, especially a new relationship between Jewish people and the WCC, and also new Jewish-Muslim dialogue initiatives, but this issue will not be discussed in this thesis.

2.4.2 From the Ajaltoun meeting (1970) to the Kingston conference (1979); an ongoing process towards 'The policy and guidelines to dialogue with people of other living faiths'

Reflecting on the aftermath of Uppsala, Samartha emphasized that many more meetings and consultations around 'dialogue' were held since Uppsala. He described that those events were held because of the pressure of historical events, a more sensitive understanding of people of other faiths, a deeper awareness of cultural interdependence, the need to rethink the meaning and practice of mission, and a recognition that global problems facing mankind bind together the destiny of people everywhere have all contributed to make dialogue between men of living faiths as the major concerns of the ecumenical movement.¹⁴⁶

In response to numerous requests from WCC member churches, the WCC at the Central Committee meeting in Addis Ababa, in 1971, formulated the "Policy statement and guidelines to dialogue with people of other Living Faiths". Samartha called it the "Interim Policy Statement with guidelines on dialogue".¹⁴⁷ In this regard it is important to note that what became known as the Addis Ababa Statement originally was known as "An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines to dialogue". These interim guidelines of course could not be

¹⁴⁵ Johnson 1975:105

¹⁴⁶ Samartha 1971:7

¹⁴⁷ Samartha 1977:9; cf. Scherer and Bevans 1992:12

separated from the Ajaltoun Memorandum (1970), "Zurich statement" (1970), where the first consultation about 'Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths' was held since Samarthā entered his office within WCC. It also clearly reflected 'the six principles' which was written by Samarthā before the Addis Ababa conference in 1971. The six principles were called by Samarthā 'tentative suggestions', but they clearly played a major role in the "Interim Policy Statement with guidelines on dialogue", which became a leading document at Addis Ababa.¹⁴⁸

a) The Ajaltoun memorandum, 1970

The meeting in Ajaltoun, Lebanon, in March 1970 was as realization of what the WCC had approved at its Central Committee meeting in Canterbury, in 1969. One of the resolutions at that time was to approve the plan for an Ecumenical Consultation on Dialogue with Men of Other Living Faiths in March 1970 in Beirut, and the formation of an ad hoc committee to prepare the consultation.¹⁴⁹ This was the first time under the auspices of the World Council that Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims were brought together. The particular object of the consultation according to Samarthā was 'to gather together the experience of bilateral conversations between Christians and men of the major faiths of Asia, with a multi-lateral meeting and to see what could be learned for future relations between people of living faiths'.¹⁵⁰

The Ajaltoun consultation (1970) was not a conference of world religions even though the participants were from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian backgrounds. Samarthā insisted that this meeting was a specialized and limited consultation called to consider a particular theme," *dialogue between men of living faiths - present discussions and future possibilities.*"¹⁵¹ The emphasis was thus not on the *concept* of dialogue but on the actual *engagement* in dialogue itself.

¹⁴⁸ Samarthā 1996:81-82

¹⁴⁹ Samarthā 1971:8

¹⁵⁰ Samarthā 1971:7

¹⁵¹ Samarthā 1971:8

The participants came from seventeen different countries, with three Hindus, four Buddhists, three Muslims and twenty eight Christians (including five members of the staff of the World Council of Churches).¹⁵²

Samartha quoted a significant part from the Ajaltoun consultation in his report with the title 'Let us continue the Conversation'. He wrote: "Part of the significance of the meeting, as noted in the Ajaltoun memorandum, lies in the fact that: "It was the experience of the consultation that something very new had been embarked upon...what was experienced together was felt to be very positive, a matter for general thankfulness and something to be carried forward urgently".¹⁵³

Part V of the memorandum, which was written by Muslim participants, is of particular interest: 'Dialogue is a sign of hope, both for the inside and the outside of man'.¹⁵⁴ Samartha admitted that the Ajaltoun Consultation should be regarded as a modest beginning, tentative and exploratory, nevertheless full of promise. It was recognized that genuine dialogue can be carried out only in an atmosphere of freedom - freedom to be committed to one's own faith and to be open to the convictions of the other. He added that it was a meeting between persons who were deeply committed to their respective faiths, who were aware of the perils and promises of dialogue, and who were yet willing to accept that dialogue is not so much a problem to be solved as an experience to be shared in joy and expectation.¹⁵⁵

b) The Zürich statement (1970)

Following the Ajaltoun Consultation, a group of twenty-three Christian theologians - Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant - met together at Zürich in May 1970. Among the participants there was only one from India, besides Samartha himself (who represented the WCC). The rest were European

¹⁵² Samartha 1971:15 Cf. Samartha and Fulton 1971:107-117, while the full memorandum of this meeting can be found in Samartha 1971:107-124

¹⁵³ Samartha 1971:7 Cf. Samartha and Fulton 1971:107

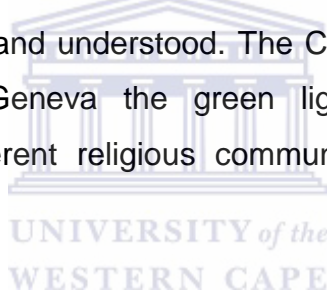
¹⁵⁴ Samartha 1971:23 Cf. Samartha and Fulton 1971:113

¹⁵⁵ Samartha and Fulton 1971:9

Christian leaders. The main purpose of this meeting was to consider and evaluate the Ajaltoun Consultation and to see what lessons could be learned from such meetings for Christians in their continuing dialogue with men of other faiths.¹⁵⁶ As a result of this evaluation of Ajaltoun, this statement is more systematic and was written in 24 points, concluding that dialogue is 'inevitable, urgent and full of opportunity'.

c) The Addis Ababa statement (1971)

The Ajaltoun and Zürich memorandums were taken to a deeper level of discussion at Addis Ababa, in January 1971. After a long debate, the statements were accepted by the Central Committee as an Interim Policy Statement and Guideline to Dialogue".¹⁵⁷ It was observed that there is not full consensus in the member Churches on how the dialogue with men of other faiths was to be evaluated and understood. The Central Committee decided to give the Secretariat in Geneva the green light, especially for bilateral conversation with the different religious communities and to evaluate their outcome at a later stage.¹⁵⁸



Samartha quoted some points from Addis Ababa statement (viz the *preamble*) in his book *Between Two Cultures* as follows:

“Through the life and witness of its constituent churches and through the activities it undertakes on their behalf, the WCC is involved in manifold relationships with people in different countries. Dialogue, understood as a human activity in which spiritual, intellectual and practical elements are involved, is a natural part of this relationship. At the present time dialogue is inevitable because Christians everywhere now live in pluralist societies. It is urgent because all people are under common pressures in the search for justice, peace and a hopeful future. It is full of opportunity because Christians can now in new ways, discover new aspects of the servanthood and lordship of

¹⁵⁶ Samartha 1971:33

¹⁵⁷ Samartha 1971:47; cf. 1996:72-73

¹⁵⁸ Samartha 1971:47

Christ and new implications for the witness of the church in the context of moving towards a common human community.”¹⁵⁹

The pertinent point here is that in dialogue, the spiritual element, intellectual and practical elements must be involved. This dialogue is understood as a natural human activity.

“Our faith in Jesus Christ, *who became human for all humanity*¹⁶⁰ for all times, sustains us in dialogue. The expression of this faith in the life and witness of the church leads us to develop relationships with people of different faiths and ideologies. Jesus Christ, who makes us free, draws us out of isolation into genuine dialogue into which we enter with faith in the promise that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.”¹⁶¹ Samartha repeats this point over and over in his book, and used it as a foundation for inter-faith dialogue.

This had been affirmed already by the Uppsala assembly (1968), which states: “The meeting with people of other faiths and no faith must lead to dialogue. A Christian's dialogue with another implies neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of ‘one's own commitment’ to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble. Such a dialogue presupposes a spiritual renewal in *the churches* and is, at the same time, itself a sign of such renewal in our churches and our societies.”¹⁶²

As dialogue with other people of living faiths continues, the committee addresses three main issues that need to be studied together by the churches:

1. What are the fundamental theological implications of dialogue? This includes

¹⁵⁹ Samartha 1996: 72-73

¹⁶⁰ Originally “who became man for all men”; Addis Ababa statement Preamble point 2.

¹⁶¹ Samartha 1971:48

¹⁶² Samartha (1971: 48) quoted from the Addis Ababa Statement “preamble”, points 1-3, with a few words that were changed from the original version. This happened especially in point 3, which he mainly quoted from Uppsala 68 Report, Geneva, p.29; and where the word “in our church” was changed to be “in the church”. Cf. the full Addis Ababa Statements (Samartha 1971b:47-54)

the questions of God's salvation offered in Jesus Christ and His presence and works in the whole world, in particular, in the lives and traditions of people of other faiths and ideologies.

2. What is the relation between dialogue, mission and witness?
3. How is dialogue to be understood and practiced in the context of indigenization without fear of syncretism?

Samartha himself try to defend his new concept of dialogue by describing a theological implication of the policy statement: First, the servanthood of Christ was put alongside his lordship as the foundation for dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies. This was in accordance with the Christ-centric basis of the WCC. The implications for dialogue of this combination were not sufficiently recognized at the time. Servanthood emphasizes the humanity of Jesus Christ, the kenosis or self-emptying of God, who puts himself alongside human beings. When the lordship of Christ is put forward without being sufficiently qualified by servanthood, it leads to proclamations about the "supremacy", "uniqueness" and "finality" of Christ, formulated in such a way as to make dialogue difficult, if not impossible, in the context of plurality.

Second, the implications of the promise of Jesus that the Holy Spirit would "lead us into all truth" for the relationship between the universal activity of the Spirit of God in all creation and in the lives of people of other faiths and secular convictions did not come to the forefront in the debate.

Third, the qualifying adjective "interim" describing the policy statement disturbed Samartha at the time. He felt that it would inhibit the churches, particularly those in Asia, to move forward with confidence and hope in seeking new relationships with people of other faiths.¹⁶³

Samartha's argumentations above show the extent to which he almost seemed to be sacrificing the deity of Jesus for the sake of interfaith dialogue. He emphasized the humanity and the servanthood of Jesus to make interfaith dialogue possible. Studying the Addis Ababa statement as 'an interim guide

¹⁶³ Samartha 1996:75

line' is very significant to understand better how Samartha's concepts were later officially developed in the Chiang Mai statement.

In his book, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, Johnson commented that the acceptance of the Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines on Dialogue in Addis Ababa, 1971, was based on the statement that "our faith in Jesus Christ" makes us free and draws us out of isolation into genuine dialogue, into which we enter with faith in the promise of Jesus Christ "that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth". The Addis Ababa statement further states that dialogue offers "the promise of discovering new dimensions of understanding our faith", opportunities for "new relationships between Christians and men of other faiths", and possibilities where our "Christian faith can be tested and strengthened". It also envisages cooperation with people of other faiths and ideologies on specific issues which "will involve not only study but also common action".¹⁶⁴

In other words, Samartha by quoting this passage agrees that the truth as found in Christianity is also found in other religions. The Holy Spirit will lead all people to understand this truth and guide them to relate to each other. The Christians and people of other faiths only need to be more open to be guided by the Holy Spirit on this matter.

The meeting in Addis Ababa, according to Samartha, was not about how to replace other religions by Christianity, but how to relate the living faith of Christians to the living faiths of other people in a pluralistic world. The question was more theological than missiological: how could those who had so far been regarded as objects of Christian mission instead be seen as partners in a global community confronting urgent issues of peace, justice and the survival of life in the cosmos.¹⁶⁵

d) The Chiang Mai statement on dialogue, 1977

The Chiang Mai Theological Consultation (1977) was called by Samartha "a pause for reflection".¹⁶⁶ According to him, this very moment was the right time

¹⁶⁴ Johnson 1975:99; cf. Samartha 1971:48,50

¹⁶⁵ Samartha 1996:64

¹⁶⁶ Samartha 1977:136

to evaluate progress after nearly a decade of meetings with neighbors of living faiths. He probably referred to the Addis Ababa Statement (1971), and his 'six tentative suggestions' of guidelines for dialogue, which were sent to the churches to contemplate and consider. After eight years Samartha thought the time was ripe for this concept to be properly evaluated.¹⁶⁷

In Samartha's view, this was the time to take into account the lessons learned and suggest possibilities for the future.¹⁶⁸ This meeting also served as a continuation of the WCC Assembly in Nairobi, 1975, where the topic about "inter-religious dialogue" was also deeply debated and "created tension" among participants. There were five guests from other faiths (Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh) who were invited and present at the conference.¹⁶⁹

Their visible presence according to Samartha brought a touch of reality, a reminder of the fact of the plurality of faiths in the global community, not in an abstract way for theological discussions but in a personal way through the presence of people of living faiths. These five guests were present not as representatives of their particular faiths but as individuals committed to their own faith and concerned with the search for community in a world of tension and conflict.¹⁷⁰ From 'searching for community' (Nairobi, 1975), the ecumenical ideas, under Samartha's influence, over time developed into 'dialogue in the community', which also became the main theme of the Chiang May Theological consultation, 18-27 April, 1977.

Under this topic it was understood that the Christian community, within the human community at large, has a common heritage and a distinctive message to share. Christians therefore need to reflect on the nature of the community that they as Christians seek and on the relation of dialogue to the life of the churches, asking themselves how they can be communities of service and witness without diluting their faith or compromising their commitment to

¹⁶⁷ Samartha 1981:35-36

¹⁶⁸ Samartha 1977:8

¹⁶⁹ Samartha 1996:104

¹⁷⁰ Samartha 1996:106

Christ.¹⁷¹

There were five main topics from Chiang Mai consultation which was adopted by The Theological Consultation on Dialogue in Community: A) Communities and the Community of humankind; this section has 9 points about Christian community towards other communities. B) The Christian Community: The Churches and The Church; this section has seven points from 10 to 16 about the churches and the Church. C) On Dialogue; Reason for Dialogue, from 17 to 20 ; D) The theological significance of peoples of other faiths and ideologies, from 21 to 24 and E) Syncretism, from 25 to 30.¹⁷²

For the purposes of this study the Chiang Mai statements we will focus on, especially in chapter three (where we discuss Samartha's concept of inter-religious dialogue) and four (where his concept is critically analysed), are only about Dialogue (point C above, and Part II in the Chiang Mai Statement), and about Christian-Muslim Relations (part III of the Statement).

Scherer and Bevans had recorded part II from Chiang Mai, as revised in the Kingston WCC Assembly, in 1979, in their book *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, but not part III about Christian relations with other faiths, especially Jewish and Muslim. Is this by accident or did it happen on purpose? To me, part III is very significant as a direct guideline on dialogue with other religions.

The Chiang Mai statement on Dialogue was started with number 17, but Kingston started it from 16. Scherer and Bevans¹⁷³ did not record part I about the community from 1 to 16. They only quote the Kingston Statement 1979, without any further explanation why they quoted from the Kingston Statement, but ignored the Chiang Mai and Addis Ababa statement as representing the original Dialogue concept. This is probably because the Kingston Statement was the one formally adopted by the WCC Central committee meeting (1979), and then published for the first time after having been revised and amplified.

¹⁷¹ Samartha 1977:135

¹⁷² Read the "Chiang Mai Statement" in Samartha 1977:134-169

¹⁷³ Scherer and Bevans 1992:12

Interestingly, even though the Chiang Mai Statement was revised from the Addis Ababa Statement (as the original policy and guidelines to Dialogue, and the origin of the concept was born in, India 1961), nonetheless, these historical backgrounds were never mentioned once in the later revisions; neither in Chiang Mai, nor in Kingston or Canberra, 1991. These crucial aspects are not even mentioned in the authoritative study about Samartha's work, Eeuwout Klootwijk from Holland in his book *Commitment and Openness* (1992). Their story about the history of interfaith dialogue is jumping from Uppsala to Nairobi, and then from Chiang Mai to Kingston. However, when this incorrect story line is followed, Samartha and the WCC seem inconsistent in developing the original idea of Interfaith Dialogue. What has gone missing in such an oversimplified version is the reconciliation and peace through Christ only, as was emphasized by Devanandan right in the beginning of the process, in India in 1961.

e) The Kingston statement on dialogue, 1979

The WCC Assembly in Kingston, Jamaica 1979 was a continuation of the Chiang Mai Theological Consultation of 1977. After the approval of the "Policy and Guidelines to Dialogue with People of Other Living Faiths" by the WCC Central Committee in Chiang Mai, two years later, the WCC Assembly in Kingston adopted the Chiang Mai Document with further revision, and then at the same time, the document was published for the first time as it was then called: "Guidelines on Dialogue", and not "Interim Guidelines" (Kingston, 1979).¹⁷⁴

Alan Brockway, an American devoted to Jewish-Christian dialogue in the United States, and one of the colleagues of Samartha, admitted during a workshop of the World Council of Churches' Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) that many of the details in the "Guidelines" may be

¹⁷⁴ The WCC statements on Dialogue (Chiang Mai 1977), can be found in Samartha 1977: 134-169 and Kingston 1979 can be read in Scherer and Bevans 1992:12-17). In the beginning, this was first published as a booklet by WCC publisher, and later published by Orbis Books together with other Statements on Mission and Evangelism from other Christian Church organizations under the title "New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1, edited by James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Cf. Scherer and Bevans 1992:12)

out of date "but that the theological thrust remains bright and clear."¹⁷⁵ Brockway did not specify which points from the Guidelines were out of date, but this remark is indicating that the concept of inter-faith dialogue somehow is not a permanent one or an absolute truth on par with Scripture.

2.5 The Specific Ecumenical Conferences on Dialogue between Christians and Muslims

Besides general statements on Christian Dialogue with people of other Living Faiths and Ideologies, WCC also produced specific statements on dialogue with Muslims at meetings where Samartha was organizer or part of the committee. I here only discuss two main documents related to Christian and Muslim dialogue, to which Samartha himself constantly always refers: Broumana (1972) and Chambesy (1976).

2.5.1 The Broumana statement, 1972

In July 1972, forty-six persons from twenty countries (including Indonesia), were gathering in Broumana, Lebanon, to explore possibilities of understanding and cooperation.¹⁷⁶ The meeting was arranged by the sub-unit for Dialogue with people of Living Faiths and Ideologies of the WCC. All the participants of this meeting came in their personal capacity, both from the Muslim and Christian communities.¹⁷⁷

The most important thing from this meeting is the memorandum *In Search of Understanding and cooperation*, which I shall call the Broumana Statement.¹⁷⁸ This memorandum contains five points, but I will only quote here point three (p.158):¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Brockway 2008

¹⁷⁶ Samartha 1973:164-165) wrote in the list of participants, that there were four members from Indonesia: Prof. A. Mukti Ali when he was still Minister of Religious Affairs in the Government of Indonesia; Dr Anwar Hajono, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Ibn Khaldun University, Jakarta; Dr. Peter D. Latuihamallo, STT Jakarta; Mr. Marsudi, Secretary to the Minister of Religious Affairs Dept. of Agama, Jakarta.

¹⁷⁷ WCC 1973:5

¹⁷⁸ This Memorandum right from the beginning had been translated in to Arabic, French and German on request from Geneva (Cf. Samartha and Taylor 1973:158-159)

¹⁷⁹ The rest can be read in Samartha 1973:156-163

“Guiding principles for our Dialogue: We do not desire to confine our conversation and our collaboration to a group of experts. We feel an obligation to help to make possible a wider spirit and practice of dialogue in our communities. We recognize that different situations call for different sensitivities, but that certain irreducible principles should be respected. The implications of these principles will be particular to various contexts and will need to be patiently and practically worked out.

(a) Frank witness: We did not ask each other to suppress or conceal his convictions. In dialogue each should bear witness of his motives to his fellows and to God. This frank witness can help to remove complacency, suspicion or unspoken fears.

(b) Mutual Respect: We believed that mutual respect was necessary principle for our dialogue. This does not involve a stale co-existence of 'live and let live', but a sensitive regard for the partner's scruples and convictions, sympathy for his difficulties and an admiration for his achievements. We should avoid all invidious comparison of strength in our tradition with weakness in the other, of the ideal in one with the actuality in the other.

(c) Religious freedom: We should be scrupulous about our protection of religious liberty. This involves not only the rights of any religious minority, but also the rights of each individual. While we accept that both religious traditions have a missionary vocation, proselytism should be avoided, whether by a majority intent upon pressing a minority to conform, or whether by a minority using economic or cultural inducements to swell its ranks. It is especially unworthy to exploit the vulnerability of the uneducated, the sick and the young.”¹⁸⁰

From the Broumana statement is clear that the equality between the people of different faiths was recognized, and even more: emphasized. Proselytism was avoided especially through exploitation of the vulnerability of the uneducated, sickness or other social problems, but it did not forbid the evangelism and mission by any religion. It rather emphasized the acceptance that both religious traditions have a missionary vocation. It means that the Broumana statement

was still providing a space for mission but not for proselytism.

2.5.2 The Chambesy statement, 1976

The meeting between Christians and Muslim leaders in Chambesy (June 1976), Birmingham, was a very sensitive and significant meeting in directing the next Christian Dialogue with Muslims. Beside the fact that the topic of this consultation, "Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah", emphasized a point that is essential to both Christianity and Islam, the topic also needed clarity doctrinally from this two great religions. There were 16 participants from ten countries, and two among them were from Indonesia.¹⁸¹

The *Statement of the Conference on "Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah", Chambesy, June 1976*, gives a representative impression of the spirit of that meeting:¹⁸²

1. In recognition that mission and da'wah are essential religious duties in both Christianity and Islam, a conference on Christian Mission and Islamic da'wah was organized by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, in consultation with the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, on June 26th-30th, 1976. Besides examining the nature of mission and of da'wah, and the experience of each community of the missionary/da'wah activity of the other, the purpose of the conference was to promote reciprocal understanding between Muslims and Christians and to explore the means for a modus vivendi assuring the spiritual wellbeing of all.
2. The conference is in essential agreement that their respective communities, wherever they constitute a minority of the population, should enjoy a de jure existence; that each religious community should

¹⁸⁰ Samartha and Taylor 1973:158-159; cf. Johnson 1975:101

¹⁸¹ From Indonesia was Professor Ihromi. He was as rector of STT Jakarta, and Dr Muhammed Rasjidi, a former minister of Religious Affairs of the Government of Indonesia. He came to Chambesy as Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Indonesia (Cf. Ahmad and Kerr 1982:69)

¹⁸² Ahmad and Kerr 1982: 99-102

be entitled to live its religious life in accordance with its religion in perfect freedom. The conference upholds the principle of religious freedom recognizing that the Muslims as well as the Christians must enjoy the full liberty to convince and be convinced, and to practice their faith and order their religious life in accordance with their own religious laws and principles; that the individual is perfectly entitled to maintain his/her religious integrity in obedience to his/her religious principles and in faithfulness to his/her religious identity.

3. The Conference agrees that the family is a supremely precious and necessary institution. It expresses serious concern over the threats of disintegration and secularization facing the family institution, and it recommends that religious family law, whether Muslim or Christian, be not interfered with or changed in any way, directly or indirectly, by outsider to their traditions. It also agrees that the family and community should have the right to ensure the religious education of their children by organizing their own schools, or by having teachers of their own denominations to teach religion to their children in the school, or by other suitable means. In any case they should be allowed to organize their cultural and spiritual life without outside interference, though with sensitivity to the situation in multi-religious societies.
4. The conference was grieved to hear that some Christians in some Muslim countries have felt themselves limited in the exercise of their religious freedom and have been denied their right to church buildings. The Muslim participants regard such violation as contrary to Islamic law as well as to the principle of religious freedom enunciated above.
5. The conference recognizes fully the right of Christians as well as of Muslims to order their corporate life in accordance with the injunctions of their own religious principles and laws, and to have and maintain all requisite institutions in accordance with their religious principle and laws as equal citizens.
6. The Christian participants extend to their Muslim brethren their full

sympathy for the moral wrongs which the Muslim world has suffered at the hands of colonialists, neo-colonialists and their accomplices. The conference is aware that Muslim-Christian relations have been affected by mistrust, suspicion and fear. Instead of cooperating for their common good, Muslims and Christians have been estranged and alienated from one another. After more than a century of colonialism during which many missionaries served the interests of colonial powers, whether deliberately or unconsciously, the Muslims have felt reluctant to co-operate with the Christians whom they have fought as agents of their oppressors. Although the time has certainly come to turn a new page in this relationship, the Muslims are still reluctant to take the step because their suspicion of Christian intentions continues. The reason is the undeniable fact that many of the Christian missionary services today continue to be undertaken for ulterior motives. Taking advantage of Muslim ignorance, of Muslim need for educational, health, cultural and social services, of Muslim political stresses and crisis, of their economic dependence, political division and general weakness and vulnerability, these missionary services have served purposes other than holy- proselytism, that is adding members to the Christian community for reason other than spiritual. Recently revealed linkages of some of these services with the intelligence offices of some big powers confirm and intensify an already aggravated situation. The conference strongly condemns all such abuse of diakonia (service). Its Christian members dissociate themselves in the name of Christianity from any service which has degraded itself by having any purpose whatever beside agape' (love for God and neighbor). They declare that any diakonia undertaken for any ulterior motive is a propaganda instrument and not an expression of agape'. They agree to exercise their full power and use whatever means at their disposal to bring Christian churches and religious organizations to a proper awareness of this situation.

7. The conference, being painfully aware that Muslim attitudes to Christian mission have been so adversely affected by the abuse of diakonia, strongly urges Christian churches and religious organizations to suspend

their misused diakonia activities in the world of Islam. Such a radical measure is necessary to cleanse the atmosphere of Muslim-Christian relations and orientate them towards mutual recognition and co-operation worthy of the two great religions. The conference urges strongly that all material assistance donated by outside churches and religious organizations henceforth be distributed wherever possible through or in co-operation with the governments and local communities of people for whom they are intended, respecting the dignity and integrity of the people concerned.

8. The conference urges that soon after the measures mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs begin to be implemented, Muslims and Christians should be invited to an assembly representative of the two faiths to consider the methods of mission and da'wah, and the rules pertinent to each religion, and to seek modalities for enabling each religion to exercise its missionary call / da'wah in accordance with its own faith. The conference recognizes that mission and da'wah are essential religious duties of both Christianity and Islam, and that suspension of misused diakonia services is to the end of re-establishing mission in the future on a religiously sound basis acceptable to both. Such an assembly may also establish permanent organs with Christian and Muslim participation for the purpose of preventing or dealing with aberrations or violations of Muslim/Christian understanding by either party.
9. The conference is aware that good neighborly and co-operative relations between Christians and Muslims cannot exist or endure unless there is a deep-anchored reciprocal understanding of theologies, histories, moral and legal doctrines, social and political theories and problems of acculturation and modernization faced by the two faiths. To this end the conference urges that the World Council of Churches, the Vatican and the International Islamic organizations sponsor conferences at which these themes will be examined and discussed at regular intervals.
10. The conference, and especially the Muslim participants, expresses their deep and heartfelt appreciation to the WCC and the editors of the IRM

for calling and sponsoring this conference. All participants express their joy that God has granted them the grace to bear in patience and empathize with one another. They are thankful to God that this conference may have made some contribution toward purifying the atmosphere of Muslim-Christian relations, and they pray that relations between their people may soon blossom into spiritual fellowship, to the glory of God alone." ¹⁸³

The ten points of the Chambesy statement are quoted here to show that all of them are shaped by the testimony from Indonesian participant, which sounds biased and blaming Indonesian Christians.¹⁸⁴ The Chambesy Statement seemingly wanted to continue much deeper what had been discussed in Broumana. In general, both of the statements speak with a similar voice, the voice of equality and religious freedom. Unfortunately, the reality does not always reflect what had been agreed to be written on paper. The arrogance of the majority group, especially in many Muslim countries, is still on the rise, leading to proselytism and the oppression of minority groups. The current Indonesian situation is one of the examples of this.

2.6 Conclusion

Samartha's concept of 'dialogue of Christians with men of other living faiths', in the beginning was inspired by the International Missionary Council's concept of 'Christian mission towards the non-Christian world'. The missionary approach towards other religions was intensively debated since the IMC Conference in Tambaram, India 1938. Christian theologians from Asia and other parts of the two-thirds world brought this issue to the IMC's attention, and later placed it on the WCC agenda, after the IMC was integrated into the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the combined conference in New Delhi, India, 1961.

Since then, in the new understanding, Mission was no longer understood as Church mission, or Christian Mission, which was normally interpreted in the

¹⁸³ Unfortunately, the Muslim objection towards Christianity in Chambesy statement (1976), is in fact exactly what they are doing today in Indonesia, by practicing Islamization. The agreements in Chambesy have thus been violated by Muslims today.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Rasjidi 1976:71-77

non-western world as referring to Westernization. Mission was then understood as God's mission or 'Missio Dei'. God in His universality has come to the world; to the world of cultures, to the world of tradition, the world of religions and the world of histories. The World is the goal of mission, not the Church. The Church is only called by God as one of the instruments to 'witness' to others, that the people may come to Him but not necessarily to come to the church.

Within the WCC heritage from the IMC (summarized by 'Study the Word of God and The Other Living Faiths'), this new, controversial understanding of God's mission to the world was continually debated within the WCC in an attempt to find a solution: what must be done related to people of other Faiths in the context of mission?. In 1968 Samartha joined the WCC Assembly in Uppsala and he suggested 'dialogue with people of other Living Faiths' as the right name for a Christian missionary approach to other living Faiths. As new Secretary to the Department of *Studies in Mission and Evangelism* (1968-70), Samartha then worked hard to find the right concept of what he suggested as 'Dialogue with people of Other Living Faiths', and socializing that concept into the agendas of the churches worldwide.

For Samartha, mission is not evangelism or proselytism by Christians to people of other living Faiths, but dialogue with people of other Faiths or ideologies to reach the same goal: concern for a common humanity, working together to solve the social problems in the communities - flowing from the commitment of each person to his or her respective faith or ideology.

During his time at the WCC, as secretary in the Department of studies in Mission and Evangelism (1968-1970), and later as the first Director of the sub-unit on Dialogue (1971-1980), his agenda - discussion about 'dialogue with people of other living Faiths' - dominated the ongoing debates on mission in the WCC as an ecumenical body of Christian churches. Samartha, nevertheless, was never disheartened or led astray by all the criticisms, both from within the WCC itself and from the outside. He travelled all over the world to promote the concept of what 'dialogue with other Faiths' is all about. He invited some scholars from non-Christian faiths to WCC Assemblies, and he organized some meetings and conferences with people of other Faiths, just to get the

appropriate recognition of the concept of Dialogue globally.

Many Statements were produced from each meeting, and more memorandums were achieved from each consultation: from the Ajaltoun Statement in Lebanon. (1970) to the publication of the Kingston statement 'Policy and Guidelines to Dialogue' in Jamaica (1979), and with Muslims, from the Broumana statement, in Lebanon (1972) to the Chambesy statement from Switzerland (1976).

These are the various contexts in which Samartha stood to develop his concept of 'Christian dialogue with people of other Living Faiths. It rested on the basic conviction that 'the objective of dialogue must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of truth' (Addis Ababa summaries 1971), 'that non-Christians also have their responses to the mystery of human existence' (Uppsala 1968); and that 'proselytism should be avoided' (Broumana 1972).

Why Samartha was so content with this concept, and how he developed his personal concept of dialogue within all the WCC documents on dialogue with other living Faiths, will be studied in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

SAMARTHA'S CONCEPT OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THE WCC STATEMENTS ON CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

Introduction

Klootwijk in his PhD dissertation about Commitment and Openness in the work of Samartha (1992) has dealt at length with Samartha's concept of God, Christ, Holy Spirit and Scripture, mission and dialogue with other faiths.

In this chapter, I shall focus on Samartha's concept of Christian dialogue with people of other living faiths, and the uniqueness of Christ and the Holy Spirit in relation to Christian mission, without repeating what Klootwijk had already done. Of course, a certain overlap will be inevitable, but it will be clear that my focus is especially on the impact of Samartha's idea of dialogue on Christian mission. The aim of this chapter is to establish his original concept of 'inter-religious dialogue' and how he developed his concept while significantly influencing the WCC's statements on Inter-Faith Dialogue.

The development of his concept will be established by studying his writings, particularly by unpacking the main WCC statements about dialogue with people of other faiths, in which he played a leading role, since the Addis Ababa Statement (1971), via the Chiang Mai Statement (1977) and the Kingston Statement (1979). The last part of this chapter is revealing Samartha's expectation about the future of dialogue with people of other Faiths.

3.1 Samartha's Basic Concept of Inter-Religious Dialogue

Samartha's original concept of Inter-religious dialogue was inspired by his previous professor, Paul. D. Devanandan, who was Professor of Philosophy and History of Religions at United Theological College (UTC) from 1932-

1949.¹⁸⁵ Devanandan's view towards other religions, that 'the revelation and salvation can be found outside Christianity' impressed him very much. Devanandan's view towards other religions, according to Klootwijk is more inclusive rather than exclusive.¹⁸⁶ Klootwijk described that in inclusive terms, such as the fact that the God of Jesus Christ is a God of universal love. His grace operates everywhere, so that adherents of different religions may find ways of salvation and be saved through the different routes offered by their religions. Revelation and salvation can be found outside the boundaries of Christianity, yet, Christ is still the fullest revelation of God, the final expression of God's love; the saviour of humankind; the norm above all other norms. This, according to Klootwijk, is Devanandan's inclusivist approach.¹⁸⁷

Besides Devanandan, Samartha was also influenced by M.M. Thomas about 'Ideology': that 'the church's concentration today must not always be on individual salvation, but should be related to the social liberation of humanity in different areas of life.'¹⁸⁸ In addition, he was also influenced by the Indian thinker Pandipeddi Chenchiah with his passion about Indian culture and nationality. This scholar inspired Samartha on the issue of 'rethinking Christianity in India'.¹⁸⁹

In his tribute to Devanandan's memorial service, Samartha praised Devanandan's appreciation of Hinduism both in its traditional form and in its modern manifestations.¹⁹⁰ He pointed to Devanandan's basic conviction that an interpretation of modern Hindu movements should be based on an informed understanding of the ancient values of Hinduism. Without this, Samartha said, 'the presentation of the Christian Gospel would not make any worth-while impact on the life and thought of Hindus in this generation.'

Samartha in this regard wanted to say that the Christian approach to Indian culture in his generation must be based on the value of original Indian religion

¹⁸⁵ Klootwijk 1992:22

¹⁸⁶ Klootwijk 1992:9; cf. Drummond 1985: 25, chapter VII

¹⁸⁷ Klootwijk 1992:8; cf. Knitter 1985:142

¹⁸⁸ Samartha 1996:40

¹⁸⁹ Klootwijk 1992:23

¹⁹⁰ Klootwijk 1992:63; cf. Samartha 1963:184

and culture. Samartha expressed his admiration of Devanandan's new way of evangelism. Because Devanandan was convinced of the comprehensiveness of God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ, he was led to take very seriously people of other faiths. He organized dialogues in which the central point was not 'an academic comparison of systems of thought', but a mutual meeting on the basis of common humanity'.¹⁹¹

Devanandan was actually following Hendrick Kraemer's idea about the 'discontinuity' of other religions. Samartha, however, claimed Devanandan's view as a significant break-through, which 'has shifted the emphasis from monologue to dialogue, from mere confrontation to real communication'.¹⁹² The same analysis applied to Devanandan's Christological insight. Samartha insisted that his Christology was ranging from the affirmation of the all-inclusive and continuing redeeming work of God in Jesus Christ to the ongoing work of Christ; bringing healing and wholeness to broken humanity in whose work Christians can share as co-workers.¹⁹³

Based on this fact, Samartha's original concept of inter-religious dialogue, therefore, can not be separated from his understanding of Devanandan's idea about a new Christian approach to Hinduism in India: that dialogue is not an academic comparison of systems of thought but 'a mutual meeting between Christians and Hindus on the basis of common humanity'. The aim of this dialogue is to understand the ancient value of each tradition without confrontation, because in Christ, God has redeemed and reconciled men to Him, and that the salvation can also be found within other religions outside Christianity.

Samartha in the beginning adopted this concept, but later, as Klootwijk revealed, he explored further into the consequences of his experiences in and through dialogue. While Devanandan's theology can be characterized as a preparation for dialogue, Samartha's theological reflections have taken shape in the context of dialogue practice. In this sense, Klootwijk concludes, that

¹⁹¹ Klootwijk 1992:63; cf. Samartha 1963:188 and Devanandan 1961:xii

¹⁹² Klootwijk 1992:63; cf. Samartha 1963:188

Samartha has moved beyond Devanandan.¹⁹⁴

3.2 Samartha's Original Concept of Mission

As a son of an Indian pastor who was working under the Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM), Samartha's view on mission was originally shaped by the Basel missionaries' teaching which was strongly influenced by the German pietist movement. He was convinced that there was no other way of receiving the Gospel except through the ministry and methods of the Basel Mission. Some of the characteristic elements of the Basel Mission legacy which Samartha enumerates are the centrality of the Bible; the great attention given to evangelism and the close connection between work and worship as part of the Christian vocation in the World.¹⁹⁵ He admitted that his Christian character was deeply shaped by the Basel Mission. Though the Basel Mission Christians constituted a minority in a Hindu environment, Christian life within the Basel Mission community was flourishing. This conviction was still with him at least until he was at St. Aloysius College, in Mangalore (1939-1941).

During his study and as active member of the Student Christian Movement, he met with Christian Students from other denominations. He was then able to see another picture of Basel Mission ministry. He observed that the Basel Mission Christians adopted a rather isolated position in the Indian society. Klootwijk quoted him from his writing, *Our Task Ahead*, 1951, where he wrote, "We are an almost introverted community, still suffering from the 'mission-compound complex'. To break down our isolation and to provide fellowship aimed at strengthening our spiritual life is one of our great needs".¹⁹⁶ In his book *Between Two Cultures* he described this experience as introverted, inferior and marginalized. He stated that they, as a small minority of Protestants in Mangalore, was so isolated geographically and spiritually, that they became introverted and suffered from a deep sense of inferiority.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Klootwijk 1992:64

¹⁹⁴ Klootwijk 1992:64; cf. Sebastian 1988:32

¹⁹⁵ Klootwijk 1992:21

¹⁹⁶ Klootwijk 1992:22; cf. Samartha 1996:9

¹⁹⁷ Samartha seemed to resent and blame the Basel Missionaries who were mainly German and Swiss pietists, who did not want to have contact with the Indian Government, with their British

This new picture led him to a new 'journey' especially when he studied theology at the United Theological College (UTC), in Bangalore (1941-1945), under the teaching of Paul D. Devanandan as Professor of Philosophy and History of Religions. As a Christian Student, he joined the Youth Mission Christian Association (YMCA) at campus, where he met an Indian theologian, Pandipeddi Chenchiah, who made an impact on him. Chenchiah once delivered a lecture at the local YMCA under the theme 'Rethinking Christianity in India'. The speaker emphasized his commitment to Christ and his criticisms of Western Christianity. This event had a strong influence on Samartha's subsequent journeys.¹⁹⁸

Samartha's original concept of inter-faith dialogue, therefore, can be summarized as follows: because God's love in Jesus Christ is a universal love, so therefore, the revelation and salvation can be found also outside of Christianity. His grace operates everywhere within all religions, cultures and ideology. God in Christ has redeemed and reconciled men to Him, so the church therefore must not always concentrate on individual salvation, but rather work for social liberation in regard to all the many social problems of humanity. For this reason, for Christians anywhere, he announced that the time was ripe to rethink how they should approach other religions in the new diverse and plural contexts. In the Indian context, this approach was called dialogue with Hinduism. Thus, dialogue for him was not an academic comparison of systems of thought, but rather a mutual meeting between Christians and other faiths on the basis of a common humanity.¹⁹⁹

3.3 The new development in Samartha's concept of inter-religious dialogue

Samartha's theological thinking was developed further since he was studying abroad, particularly in USA, 1949-1952. His supervisors, such as Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Malcolm Pitt, had a deep impact on his theological

ties, at that time. He wrote: "The fact that our missionaries were German and Swiss, who had no access to the government's corridors of power so familiar to British missionaries, further marginalized us"; cf. Samartha 1996:9

¹⁹⁸ Klootwijk 1992:23

¹⁹⁹ Tentative Suggestion, point 3; cf. Samartha 1996:81

thinking.²⁰⁰ Especially the influence of Malcolm Pitt, who focused his attention on Indian art, music, symbols, and drama, which came as a 'revelation' to him, was very strong. Samartha deepened his research in Indian philosophy by further studies in Sanskrit. While he was still busy finishing his studies towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, he was invited to Basel Mission Seminary, where he attended some lectures. The Basel Mission also arranged a program for him to visit some institutions and congregations in Switzerland to give lectures and speeches. Here he met Oscar Cullmann, Karl Barth and also Hendrick Kraemer.²⁰¹ During those three years, Samartha had the opportunity to study in different countries under some of the best scholars of that time. He attained a deeper insight into Indian culture; and Western and Indian philosophy, especially concerning the notion of history. Samartha evaluated this period as extremely important for development of his thinking.²⁰² He expected the Christian theologians in India to be more critical of the western tradition in their churches.

His idea was enriched when he was appointed as associate secretary in the Department of Studies in Mission and Evangelism at the WCC's forth assembly in Uppsala 1968, to carry forward the ongoing study on *The Word of God and Living Faiths of Men* which was begun by the IMC. He intensively re-considered Devanandan's address at the WCC Assembly in New Delhi (1961), about 'called to witness'. Devanandan argued that the Church is called to witness, not to mission or evangelism.²⁰³ Here, Samartha claimed that there was a clear shift of emphasis from *mission* to *witness*.

²⁰⁰ Klootwijk (1992:26) writes about Samartha's theological studies as follows: "In 1949 he was granted a scholarship by the Church World service in New York. He took several courses included Systematic Theology under Paul Tillich; He also followed the lectures of Reinhold Niebuhr and other famous professors. He finished his Master of Theology with the title 'The Hindu view of History according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan' under the guidance of Paul Tillich and Niebuhr. He continued his study of the Hindu notion of history at Kennedy School of Mission, a department of the Hartford Seminary Foundation. His supervisor was Malcolm Pitt, Professor of Indian Studies."

²⁰¹ This part has been dealt with in chapter 2 on 'Samartha's biographical context'.

²⁰² Klootwijk 1992:27

²⁰³ Samartha 1996:42

3.3.1 Samartha's new hermeneutical approach in Indian perspective

Rethinking Christianity in India was foundational for Samartha's quest for a new hermeneutic. This desire has been constant since he was at the College in India under the influence of Devanandan and Pandipeddi. His deep research into Indian Philosophy now enabled him to rethink a new hermeneutic in Indian perspective.²⁰⁴ Due to his dissatisfaction with Western hermeneutics, he was now busy finding an appropriate way of interpreting the Bible in the Indian context. In his theological approach, he seeks to relate Christian Faith to the Vedantic context in India. In this matter, he was influenced more by one of India's most outstanding interpreters, Sarvepally Radhakrishnan. In Radhakrishnan's teaching, the Vedas are the authoritative utterances of the inspired sages who claimed contact with transcendent truth. The Transcendent Truth is understood as Brahman. Brahman is self-luminous, being the sole source of consciousness. Brahman gives the knowledge to Vedantic interpreters to determine as precisely as possible what Religious Truth really is. In the Vedas, the religious truth is known as Brahman, or as the Ultimate Reality, who enables the people to determine the truth through moral rectitude and self examination.²⁰⁵ In his theology of religion Samartha later used *The Ultimate Reality* whenever he wanted to describe the idea about God.

It is important to note that Samartha's primary goal was merely to reconcile Christianity and Hinduism in India. All his concepts developed in the context of pluralism were developed to achieve a dialogue with other faiths in seeking for the Truth.²⁰⁶ He rejected the triumphalistic way as an approach to other religions; he also did not agree with relativism and the syncretistic approaches towards pluralism. He suggests that the best option was 'dialogue'. This concept he understood not only in the sense of talking and working together,

²⁰⁴ Klootwijk (1992:201-219) described this development as follows: "In Indian perspective, traditionally, there are three instruments for the attainment of religious knowledge in Hinduism: 'sruti (what has been revealed and heard); smriti (that what is remembered); and nyaya or pramana (logical proof). Some Indian Christians elaborate new hermeneutical methods by studying and applying traditional Indian hermeneutics to their own reading of the Bible, including Samartha."

²⁰⁵ Naidoo 2009:1-2 Cf. Klootwijk (1992:167)

²⁰⁶ Klootwijk 1992:251

but as an attitude.²⁰⁷

His search for a new hermeneutic is shared by many other Asian Christians. Christian theologians in India have now become very impatient with Western theological presuppositions. Their questioning of the validity of the Western hermeneutical view was interpreted by Samartha as follows: “How is it possible that theology in India as it is transmitted and taught is still engrafted into western standards: without taking into account the religious and socio-economic realities of the Indian context? The persistent religious plurality and the overwhelming poverty cannot but influence theological thinking”.²⁰⁸ The same question was raised by Joseph Pathrapankal: “How are we to teach study and read the bible? Is it at all possible to have an Indian interpretation of the Bible?”²⁰⁹ In his book, *Search for New Hermeneutics in Asian Christian Theology* (1987) Samartha criticised the western hermeneutic as follows:

“How can the Bible, a Semitic book, formed through oral and written traditions in an entirely different geographic, historical and cultural context, appropriated and interpreted for so many centuries by the West through hermeneutic tools designed to meet different needs and shaped by different historical factors, be now interpreted in Asia by Asian Christians for their own people?”²¹⁰

As this statement illustrates, he intended to avoid the Asian dependence upon sources of authority outside Asia, as a sign of growth in maturity. He sarcastically criticized this dependence as ‘flue symptom and virus’. He stated that “every time a Biblical scholar in Europe was sneezing, theologians in Asia should not catch a cold and manifest the symptoms all over the footnotes”.²¹¹ He means by that, that Asian theologians need to be more creative and sensitive of their own context without depending on European theology all the time.

²⁰⁷ Klootwijk 1992:86

²⁰⁸ Klootwijk 1992:201-202.

²⁰⁹ Klootwijk 1992:202; cf. Pathrapankal 1982:92

²¹⁰ Samartha 1987:45; cf. Klootwijk 1992:209

²¹¹ Samartha 1987:45; cf. Klootwijk 1992:209

Samartha then emphasized three general principles for hermeneutics in what he called the plurality of Scriptures context: *First*: Christians can not ignore the long and persistent attention given to the study of Scriptures in the original languages; the meticulous attention given to the texts; their interpretation in particular contexts; and the exposition of meanings (artha, tatparya) in the life of the people. *Second*: Christians can not ignore the fact that people of other faiths have also developed their *own distinctive* hermeneutics in their own settings and without depending upon *external sources*. *Third*: “the most relevant point for Christian hermeneutics is the basic attitude in the hermeneutics of people of other faiths...The true hermeneutical search, whether Hindu or Christian, is concerned with Truth.”²¹² Samartha means by this attitude that the Christians can not claim a self-Truth in their hermeneutics, while all others are wrong. Christians must also consider how other religions' hermeneutics work in searching for the Truth, on par with Christianity. He emphasized that the task of these hermeneutics is to find *how to bridge the gap between spokenness and writtenness; what is written down is meant to arouse the hearing of the sound of God's Word and the seeing of the vision of God*. The spokenness of the Scriptures (that is, Truth) can only be apprehended by a transformation of the subject. "No hermeneutics by itself will yield truth in its fullness without purification of the mind, transformation of the heart and discipline of the body".²¹³

In these general principles, he followed several Indian theologians and their methodologies to interpret the Bible in the Indian context.²¹⁴ He was more sympathetic to what is called an *Orienting approach*: where the younger Asian Christian theologians were not so much directed at the formulation of hermeneutic rules in accordance with Western ethnical reasoning. The Bible should be used not to seek blueprints to solve modern problems, but for insights, indications and directions, which can help them as they struggle with

²¹² Klootwijk 1992:210

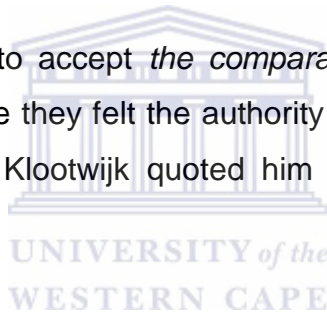
²¹³ Klootwijk 1992:210

²¹⁴ Klootwijk (1992:209-210) described Samartha's new hermeneutic as follows: Samartha distinguishes five different hermeneutical trends in Asian Christian theology which Leeuwen called Samartha's new hermeneutical trend: The Comparative approach; the dynamic approach; the Orienting approach; the symbol-sensitive approach; and the Feminist approach. Cf. Leeuwen 1990:236-238.

new problems.

In this (orienting) approach, Samartha realised that the Bible could no longer be seen as the sole source of authority: it is no longer the exclusive property of one group of people. The Scriptures of different Faiths, according to him, belong to the heritage of all humankind in the larger life of ecumenism.²¹⁵ He insisted that hermeneutics should continue within the Christian tradition, but there should also be 'a large framework of *neighbourly relationship*,' in which the *pramanas* (hermeneutical principles) should help us to "encounter the reality behind the texts". Samartha expected that there should be no subordination of the Scriptures of people of other Faiths to the Bible. According to him, all the holy books from each religion are valid and authoritative to those who accept them "because they are based on their own particular 'Faith–experience'".²¹⁶

Samartha found it difficult to accept *the comparative approach*, preferred by evangelical groups, because they felt the authority of the Bible safeguarded by this "distanced" approach. Klootwijk quoted him in his response to Glasser about this approach:



"I find it difficult to accept the view which 'limits the ground of religious authority to the Bible' alone and to regard the Scriptures as having 'the force of law.' Without taking into account the long experience of the Church in interpreting the Bible down the centuries and without being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there is the danger of scriptural texts being used. I am sure Dr. Glasser too recognizes this but I must confess that his statement that the Scripture, as the written Word of God, has 'the force of law' bothers me."²¹⁷ Samartha believed that other 'holy books' can complement the Bible because they are also inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The second approach which Samartha implemented in the Indian and Asian

²¹⁵ Klootwijk 1992:213

²¹⁶ Klootwijk 1992:213 (Samartha seemingly left the Comparative Approach as it was usually used by Evangelical interpreters who wished to emphasize the supreme authority of the Bible, compared to other scriptures. However, he was more sympathetic to the Orienting, symbol sensitive and feminist approaches for the Indian/Asian context).

²¹⁷ Klootwijk 1992:211; cf. Samartha 1987:48-49

context was the *Symbol-sensitive contextual approach* - where symbol and images are more important than the 'text'. Here, he points to the fact that there is not only a gap between biblical times and our times; but also between the language of (western) hermeneutics and the language of the people in Asia. He criticized many translations of the Bible which was done in western culture and brought to Asia in the colonial time. He explained that in these translations, the translator seldom helped people to encounter the experience and vision behind the texts. He, therefore, suggested that Asian translation of the Bible had to make use of symbols and images, derived from the living cultures of Asia. He believed that the matter of transposition of metaphors and symbols and visions from one context to another becomes a necessity in Asia rather than the search for the exact meaning of the "original" words in the original texts.²¹⁸ In other words, Samartha wanted to suggest that rereading the Bible in the Asian context by the Asian reader was more important than studying the original text of the Bible. This approach was followed by many Asian theologians such as Kosuke Koyama from Japan, Choan-Sen Song from Taiwan, and Amalorpavadass from India. The point is that the message of the Bible needs to be inculturated in the religiously plural culture of Asia.

In accordance with this approach, Samartha pleaded for leaving the restricted applicability of Western hermeneutical tools by encouraging Christian scholars to produce poems, stories, and narratives about the great themes of the Bible in communication with their own interpretative context. According to Klootwijk, Samartha himself has composed and published several poems on biblical stories.²¹⁹

The last approach promoted by Samartha in the Indian/Asian context is the *Feminist Approach*. This approach sought the liberation of women; it addressed the reality that the women in Asia were still struggling for their freedom, self respect, and human dignity in the community. He emphasized the fact that in a pluralistic country, such as India, women of different religious and ideological convictions had to work and fight together; participating in the human struggle

²¹⁸ Klootwijk 1992:214

²¹⁹ Klootwijk 1992:214

for fullness of life. So therefore, attention should be given to liberating Scriptural insights in the case of women in India particularly and generally in Asia.²²⁰ Latourette recorded this issue as one of the main agendas for the Church in India, and as constituting a major aspect of the message of liberation in this context.²²¹

When studying Samartha's hermeneutic in the Asian context, it becomes obvious that he changed theologically from his originally exclusivist position to the inclusivist one followed by his previous professor, Paul Devanandan, but then shifted even further to a hermeneutically pluralist approach of his own invention. This came about since he met Malcolm Pitt and other scholars during his study abroad. His new hermeneutical approach led him to a new concept of 'mission' and Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths.

3.3.2 Samartha's new concept of inter-religious dialogue

Since the Uppsala conference (1968), the WCC's view on other religions was changed to a much more positive one than earlier. Samartha comments that this change was the right thing at the right time (*kairos*). This was brought about more by circumstance than by choice. The WCC had to take this step because of specific factors: the pressure of historical events, the developments in the Roman Catholic Church, and the need felt by churches in Asia for a closer relationship with neighbours of other faiths.²²² Humanization became a central issue instead of mission and evangelism. Mission could no longer be understood as God's salvation to the lost, but had to be understood as part of God's activities in world history. The way to approach God's activities could happen in no other way, but dialogue with people of other faiths. Dialogue became 'a divine word', an obligation for Christians in relation to their neighbours.

The development of his new concept of dialogue will be blocked within boxes in the next pages to show clearly how his concept developed step by step.

²²⁰ Klootwijk 1992:215

²²¹ Latourette 1962:300 cf. Yewangoe 1996:65

1 *Dialogue is part of the living relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies as they share in the life of the community.*

Samartha stated in his book *Courage for dialogue* that dialogue is part of the living relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies, as they share in the life of the community.²²³ The Christians, irrespective of their different denominations, simply had to meet people of other faiths to discuss the issues in the community and solve the problems together.

In this respect, Samartha also referred to M.M. Thomas's address at the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in Bangkok January 1973, as particularly relevant for the Asian context: that the churches needed to take seriously the interaction between religious beliefs and social change. He insisted that the concern of the churches at this point in history should be not so much with religions or evangelism, as with responding to the rapid social changes taking place in societies where millions of people were clamouring for social liberation rather than individual salvation.²²⁴ Samartha's confidence about the necessity of dialogue with people of other faiths, instead of mission and evangelism, was strengthened, firstly, by Devanandan's idea that God's grace operates everywhere and that other religions may be possible ways of salvation, and secondly, by MM Thomas's emphasis that common concern for the social change in the societies is more important and more relevant instead of individual salvation.

Samartha also strengthened his idea about Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths by quoting the result of dialogue events that took place in Birmingham, January 27-28, 1968.²²⁵ He reported the participants' responses: With the long and violent history of Christian-Muslim relations in Europe, and with the memories of the Crusades not forgotten, the group felt it necessary to say, "We must never deal with each other simply as stereotyped or pigeonholed

²²² Samartha 1996:31

²²³ Samartha 1981:1

²²⁴ Samartha 1996:40

²²⁵ There was a Christian group (Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) together with a group of Muslims at Selly Oak Colleges) meeting together. The result of that meeting according

representatives of another tradition. We must seek to know each other and respect each other as individuals... we should be less conscious of our different labels as 'Christians' and 'Muslims' than of our faithfulness to the one God... There might be paradox and even tension in our mutual understanding, but it could be constructive tension..." In the context of day to day living among the problems and tensions of a multi-religious society, two points emerged from the dialogue: an emphasis on certain beliefs common to Christians and Muslims, and the urgent need to continue friendly relations.²²⁶

Samartha emphasised that there was a great need for continuing discussion and increasing society's awareness of the relevance of common assumptions as Muslims and Christians: "The supremacy of God, the availability of his revealed guidance, the expectation of an afterlife, the definition of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, the sanctity of family life and all life - such are the issues that had to be maintained by believers in an increasingly agnostic world. We look forward to further contacts and to working for and praying for a deeper reconciliation of Muslims and Christians in our service to men and to God, in our dialogue with each other and with God".²²⁷

Quoting another important event, the Ajaltoun consultation in Lebanon (1970), Samartha again emphasised that dialogue with men of other religions is not only talking about religions intellectually, even though this verbal communication is essential. Sharing theological ideas, religious experience and practical concerns must be also part of building up communication in the community.²²⁸

2 Dialogue is and ought to be a continuing Christian concern. God in Jesus Christ has himself entered in to relationship with people of all faiths and all ages, offering the good news of salvation. Dialogue is the expression of our faith in Jesus Christ in and through life in the community. Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...

to him was that several sharp problems that have arisen in recent years were solved.

²²⁶ Samartha 1981:4

²²⁷ Samartha 1981:4

²²⁸ Samartha 1981:7

for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. His incarnation, freedom and love He offered. Jesus Christ had promised that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Since truth in the Biblical understanding is not propositional but relational.

Samartha was convinced that apart from the social and cultural need for dialogue, for the sake of better relations amongst people of different backgrounds, dialogue for Christians was also the expression of their faith in Jesus Christ in and through life in the community. "Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father".²²⁹

This is the reason why Christians must take initiative to dialogue with people of other faiths according to Samartha. Religious boundaries had become walls of separation by tradition. Religions themselves become separated islands from each other instead of bridges of understanding between people. Therefore, he said "the quest for community today cuts across these boundaries, and persons of different faiths reach out to form new communities of greater freedom and love".²³⁰

3 The purpose of dialogue with people of other faiths is to bridge the 'islands' in the community which are separated by religions or traditions, by discussing differences related to religion, and sharing theological ideas and religious experience that could foster better understanding.

Samartha made a clear point here, that the purpose of dialogue with people of other faiths is to bridge the 'islands' in the community which are separated by religions or traditions, where they discuss verbally about anything related to religion, sharing theological ideas and religious experience. Samartha here sees religions only as part of traditions or cultures in the human life.

²²⁹ Samartha 1981:12

²³⁰ Samartha1981:13

3.3.3 Samartha's New Concept of Mission

In his new theological journey, Samartha soon realised that Christian understanding of mission today needed innovation. The classic understanding of the Church's mission as the activity of God for the salvation of all humanity, which Christians normally understand as an activity of the love of God in Jesus Christ, needs to be innovated.

In the pluralist context, Samartha defines that today mission is a church *response to and participation in God's* continuing mission in the world.²³¹ As a response to God's activities in a pluralist world, he insisted that the different responses of different religions need to be acknowledged as valid.²³² This was a similar concern as, for instance, the one expressed in the pluralistic proposal raised by Paul F Knitter, that representatives of the different religions had to lay aside their claims of superiority, and recognize their mutual validity, and engage in a new kind of relationship in which all can learn from each other and work together for the benefit of all.²³³

Samartha's examination of the new situation led him to believe that there were *four characteristics* of the new understanding of mission:

First: its comprehensiveness:

It means that nothing is excluded from the all-embracing love of God and the activities of the Holy Spirit; through him who is before all things and in whom all things hold together. God will reconcile to himself things in heaven and things on earth (Col. 1:15-20; Eph 1:9-10). Samartha's new concept of mission is based on the universality of God's love to the whole universe, in all times and all places. No boundaries of religion or visible communal walls can restrict mission, because the Holy Spirit can not be bound by anything. Christian mission, therefore, is to be obedient to God's continuing 'saving activities' in

²³¹ Samartha 1981:79

²³² Samartha 1991:4

²³³ Knitter 2005:28

fellowship with all people and serving all people.²³⁴ Yewangoe, one of Indonesia's leading theologians, developed this idea to encourage the churches in Indonesia to participate nationally in solving the suffering of overwhelming poverty.²³⁵

Second: its wholeness:

Mission touches the whole of human life in all its concerns. It is not only spiritual or material, not only vertical or horizontal. It means the content of mission, the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, concerns the whole human being (Luke. 4:16-21).

Samartha's new concept of mission is understood as sharing in the continuing work of God: mending the brokenness of creation; overcoming the fragmentation of humanity; and healing the rift between humanity, nature, and God, the possibilities of cooperation should be well come. He concluded the Church's mission is not to seek its own expansion but to seek first the Kingdom of God, to promote and practice the values of justice and peace, truth, and love which have been decisively revealed to Christians in the life and work and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He further emphasised that the pressures of history and the theological imperatives of new perceptions of pluralism demand that Christians seek new relationships with people of other faiths. Christians must not fail to meet this demand and transform it into an invitation to a pilgrimage together.²³⁶

Third: its historical nature:

Mission is an ongoing process; the comprehensiveness of God's mission cannot be limited by temporal factors, while the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit can not be bound by visible communal walls. Christian mission has a beginning in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, in his life, death, and

²³⁴ This concept was later developed by Yewangoe from Indonesia in his PhD dissertation with the title 'Theologia Crucis in Asia; Asian Christian views on suffering in the face of overwhelming Poverty and Multifaceted Religiosity in Asia.

²³⁵ Yewangu 1996:116-127

resurrection (in a certain historical context), but it is further applied and extended in history by the outpouring, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all cultures across the world and in all phases of history.

Fourth: its congregational context:

It means that it is not what an individual says or does about Jesus Christ that constitutes mission. Individuals are not called upon to define or defend mission, but to be obedient to God in his continuing saving activity and to be in fellowship with his people (Luke 9:1-2). The church as the body of Christ and as the community of the Holy Spirit seeks to serve God in the world through its worship, its service and its witness.²³⁷

In the new context of religious pluralism, Samartha strongly emphasized that mission cannot be understood and practiced as a one way proclamation by one particular community to the rest of the world. If Christians has a story to tell to the nations, the same also applied to neighbours of other faiths, they also have a story to tell in to the world. Mission cannot be seen as the numerical expansion of one particular religious community leading to a corresponding diminution of other communities.²³⁸ He criticized further that the word *mission* itself has always been associated with colonialism; so therefore, it may have to be abandoned.

3.3.4 Samartha's concept of the Holy Spirit

Samartha's concept of the Holy Spirit as related to other Faiths was pictured as a Mother who gives life to all her children. He commented that the question of the Holy Spirit in the pluralistic context should inevitably lead to a deeper understanding of the triune God in far more inclusive ways than Christian theology has ever done so far. He described The Spirit as the Spirit of God, and stated that The Spirit can not be detached from God; to address the Spirit is to

²³⁶ Samartha 1991:12

²³⁷ Samartha 1981:80

²³⁸ Samartha 1981:12

address God.²³⁹

He suggested, that since The Father and The Son are ‘anthropomorphic symbols in ‘a male dominated Trinity,’ so, there is the possibility of considering the Spirit as feminine, more specifically as Mother who gives life to all her children. He then concluded that the Father is the only source of the Spirit, so, there will be far more theological space for the Spirit proceeding from the Father ‘to breathe freely through the whole ecumene that includes neighbours of other faiths as well as children of God’.²⁴⁰ Samartha probably followed the Orthodox Church’s doctrine about the Holy Spirit which was based on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), that the procession of the Spirit is from the Father alone (the *filioque* controversy).²⁴¹

By this formulation, Samartha agreed that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must be approached cosmologically ‘as the universal Spirit’, for the Spirit is close to God the Father. This approach, of course, is more acceptable within a pluralist context, than the confession that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*), where the Holy Spirit is more connected to Christ’s atonement.

In his biography, he wrote: “Christians today are called upon to discern the presence and activities of the Spirit in a passionate concern for relating the promises of God to the fact of living together with people of different religious faiths and ideological convictions in the global community, and to yet undiscovered outreach of Christ’s promise that ‘when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth’ (John 16:13)”.²⁴² Especially in the context of Asia with its pluralism, Samartha admits as the Jews are close to Christians in the West, so are people of other faiths to Christians in other countries. He insisted that not all Christians in the West are converts from Judaism, but the majority of Christians in other countries (e..g. India) are converts from other religions.²⁴³

²³⁹ Klootwijk 1992:277

²⁴⁰ Klootwijk 1992:277; cf. Samartha 1990:254

²⁴¹ Cf. Klootwijk 1992:270

²⁴² Samartha 1996:199

²⁴³ Samartha 1996:194

He agrees how complex some questions about the Spirit are, particularly in the context of Christian relationships with people of other faiths. But, he added, there need not be hesitation about cooperating with people of other faiths in whose lives the signs of the Spirit are present, and who also are struggling against all kinds of evil in society. Samartha here wanted to emphasize the equality of men in all strata, because they who are struggling against evil in society have the same "spirit". Here spirit for him refers to the 'inwardness' of the human being.

Characteristically, the Spirit in the Bible according to Samartha functions as 'pointers' and 'marks'. As pointer, the Spirit leads to freedom, spontaneity, and unpredictability. No one can be sure where the Spirit is and where the Spirit is not. He is boundless. He claims that the Spirit knows no limits, being described as 'wind' in both Testaments. He further argues, as Mark, that the Spirit can be seen as the power to bring a new relationship, to create new communities of people cutting across all barriers of religion, culture, ideology, race and language. As fire, he adds, the spirit destroys all that stands in the way of the emergence of new life - outmoded dogmas, meaningless rituals, absolute customs, oppressive institutions, barriers that separate people of one community from another.²⁴⁴ He adds that "the spirit of God can not be regarded as the monopolistic possession of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, imprisoned within the steel and concrete structures of western dogma and a permanent Atlantic charter".²⁴⁵

Samartha strengthened his idea about the Spirit by relating His character with some events that happened in India: where the people gathered spontaneously against bribes (corruption), agitating and defending the weak irrespective of their different religions.²⁴⁶ One can wonder, whether he was here mixing up the Holy Spirit with the 'inward being', or the goodwill of human beings. He started with the same term 'Holy Spirit' in the New Testament, but his descriptions are mostly about the 'spirit' or the human character in India. Jesus had promised if the Holy Spirit comes, He will convince the people of their sins, and lead them

²⁴⁴ Samartha 1996:196

²⁴⁵ Samartha 1981:63

to only glorify Jesus.²⁴⁷ The clear sign in the Bible is, that the Holy Spirit always points to Jesus Christ as centre, not to the human centre. The question is whether Samartha, when speaking about the Spirit still does that in line with the New Testament: using the same term, but the concept is related to the good character of some religious people in the Indian context?

Samartha believes that the Holy Spirit in the Bible is also working in other Faiths, as in Christianity, producing the same fruits as found in Christianity. It means the Holy Spirit's movement is not only in the Church but also in the communities of people outside the visible boundaries of the church. He wishes to convince his readers about the presence of the Spirit in other religions, similar to Christianity; he states that wherever the fruits of the Spirit are to be found – 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control' (Gal.5:22) - whether in the lives of Christians or neighbours of other faiths, is not the Spirit of God present? These are visible and readily recognizable signs which do not need elaborated theological investigations. He then quoted Paul's letters: "Against such, there is no law" (Gal. 5: 22).²⁴⁸ However, Samartha in this matter just ignore a distinction between 'spiritual men' and 'natural men', as Paul also emphasized in his letter (1 Cor.2:14-15),²⁴⁹ thus leaving himself open to criticism: 'is the spirit in Hinduism just the same as the spirit in Christianity'?

According to Samartha, it would be a mistake to focus only on the ethical in the delicate task of discerning the presence of the Spirit. One of the less visible but perhaps more profound marks of the Spirit is inwardness, interiority, the power to root people's lives in the depths of God's being. Without being rooted in God one cannot produce the fruits of the Spirit. He also endorsed that 'peace' which Jesus promised to His disciples (John 14:1) by abiding in Him, is the same to which the word 'Islam' points to: that 'peace' which is the fruit of total surrender

²⁴⁶ Samartha 1996:196-197

²⁴⁷ John 16:14 Cf. John 14:26 (NIV)

²⁴⁸ Samartha 1996:196

²⁴⁹ Paul the apostle mentioned "pneumatikos anthropos" (Greek) meaning 'Spiritual men' and "sarxikos anthropos" meaning 'natural men'. The natural men can have a similar appearance as the spiritual men, but it is not necessarily from the same Spirit. (Cf.1 Cor.2:10-15 and 2 Cor. 11: 13-15: the 'other spirit can also act like the angel of light', NIV)

to God. Similarly, the restfulness of 'shalom' is based on the love, compassion and justice of God. This inwardness of life is more emphasized in Hinduism and Buddhism.²⁵⁰ It can thus be asked whether Samartha does not go overboard in his emphasis that there are no boundaries between religions or people who have different faiths, because of his conviction that there is only one spirit which leads them all to the truth.

Samartha also criticized trends in Christian theology that regard the Spirit only in terms of relating or distinguishing the Father and the Son. He strongly emphasises that the power of the Spirit is also relating people to people, people to things, and that the whole creation in its relation to God is rooted in the rhythm of Trinitarian life that nurtures and sustains Christians in the world. He believes that speaking about the Spirit is not only for the Trinity, but the wholeness of Trinitarian life. He therefore states: for the Christian "the Trinity symbolizes and points to the ultimate Mystery of God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all creation, including Christians and people of other faiths".²⁵¹

3.3.5 Samartha's concept of God

Samartha's new concept of God is no longer referring to only what the Bible described as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He approaches God from a 'hermeneutics of pluralism' and many Scriptures (especially Sanskrit-Hindu). There are twin themes in the work of Samartha to describe who God is: 'Mystery' and 'Truth'. God for him is the same as 'Ultimate Reality' (Brahman). He speaks about mystery or truth whenever he is referring to the Ultimate Reality.²⁵²

He holds on to the Mystery, because Mystery provides 'the ontological basis for tolerance'. Mystery is Reality beyond rationality: it can not be grasped by logic or defined by theological reasoning. Because human responses to this revelation of Mystery are plural, a plurality of valid ways of salvation/liberation

²⁵⁰ Samartha 1996:200

²⁵¹ Samartha 1996:201

²⁵² Klootwijk 1992:225

has to be acknowledged.²⁵³ In a pluralistic world, the different responses of different religions to the Mystery of the Infinite or Theo or Sat need to be acknowledged as valid.²⁵⁴

As far as his concept of God is concerned, we know now that even though different names of God exist in the different religions, to him they are speaking about the same God, the same 'Mystery' and 'Truth'. The relationship between Christianity and other religions according to him is 'relational distinctiveness'. By 'relational' he means that Christ also relates to neighbours of other faiths, and by 'distinctive' he means that the distinctiveness of the great religious traditions must be recognized as the different responses to the Mystery of God. Without this recognition the mutual enrichment is impossible.²⁵⁵

3.3.6 Samartha's Concept of the uniqueness of Christ and Salvation

Samartha's concept of Jesus Christ and His salvation is based on the historical criticism of scholarly views on the New Testament. He agreed that the chronological developments of Christology must start from the book of Acts which provides information about the experience of the first generation of Christians, and proceed through the synoptic gospels, and Paul's letters, ending with the fourth gospel. Samartha believed that although the historical value of Acts is controversial, one does get a sense of the manner in which early Christians looked upon Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was called Lord after the ascension (Acts 1:21), and then was called Christ after the Pentecost (2:36). In the community of the believers in Jerusalem, Jesus was called Jesus Christ of Nazareth (3:6), the Holy and the Righteous One (3:14) and God's Holy Servant (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). Jesus is first called Son of God in Syria (9:20).²⁵⁶

Does Samartha mean that the resources of information about who Christ is, is not really accurate enough to support the current Christian believe that Jesus is God incarnated? According to him, the early Christian generations had different

²⁵³ Klootwijk 1992:226-227; cf. Samartha 1987:69-88 and 1991:77

²⁵⁴ Samartha 1991:4

²⁵⁵ Samartha 1991:76-77

²⁵⁶ Samartha 1991:120

ideas of who Jesus is. In his book, *One Christ many Religions*, he emphasized that there is a distinctive view of Jesus in the early Christian community. His conclusion is that there is no hint in the New Testament of the doctrine of the incarnation, that Jesus is not regarded as a pre-existent being but a man appointed by God and anointed by the Spirit for a specific vocation and destiny.²⁵⁷ He goes further by explaining that Jesus was not regarded as divine even though described as a heavenly figure. He describes that the Messiah and the Son of God in the Gospel are generally human, and the 'Son of Man', even though described as a heavenly figure, is not regarded as divine. He claims that the Gospel comes nowhere near to saying that Jesus is God, while the Christian creed clearly said 'He is very God of very God'.²⁵⁸

Samartha, with this explanation, opened up the huge opportunity to radically revise Christian Christology, to rethink the Christian Creeds and rewrite Christian theology for the sake of dialogue with other faiths. The way he interpreted Jesus' person and work, leading to the conclusion that Jesus was only a human being, only a man appointed by God for a specific vocation and destiny, is just the same as other religions' view of who Jesus is: that Jesus has only humanity and has no Divinity. Based on this point, I totally disagree with Samartha on this matter, because he denies the reality of incarnation, he denies the supernatural nature of Jesus' works, the reality of resurrection, and the reality of Jesus' ascension to heaven. These facts are very fundamental in Christian faith.

3.4 Samartha's influence on WCC Statements about Christian dialogue with people of other Religions

To examine Samartha's influence in the WCC statements on dialogue, it is very important to understand both his personal and his theological background as already described in chapter two. Special attention will be given in this passage to his speech *Dialogue as a Continuing Christian Concern*, which he addressed in Addis Ababa before the Addis Ababa Statement was formulated (1971).

²⁵⁷ Samartha 1991:120

²⁵⁸ Samartha 1991:121

He gave three theological reasons why dialogue should be a continuing Christian concern: *First*, God in Jesus Christ has himself entered into relationship with people of all faiths and in all ages, offering the good news of salvation. He described further that the incarnation is God's dialogue with humanity. *Second*, the offer of a true community inherent in the gospel through forgiveness, reconciliation and a new creation, of which the church is a sign and a symbol, inevitably leads to dialogue. He addressed further that the freedom and love which Christ offers constrain us to be in fellowship with strangers so that all may become fellow-citizens in the household of God. *Third*, there is the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Samartha believes that the truth in the biblical understanding is not propositional but relational, and is to be sought not in the isolation of lonely meditation but in the living, personal confrontation between God and human beings and between human beings themselves.

According to him Christians cannot claim a monopoly on truth; we need to meet people of other faiths and ideologies as part of our trust in and obedience to the promise of Christ. He concludes therefore, that dialogue becomes one of the means of the quest for truth.²⁵⁹ By exposing his theological foundation for inter-religious dialogue, we will try to search the original 'soul' and 'the heart-throb' of Samartha's developing idea of dialogue, as evident in the following WCC statements towards people of other Religions.

3.4.1 Samartha's six 'tentative suggestions' as guidelines for inter-faith dialogue

Before the Addis Ababa Assembly (1971), Samartha wrote some articles about the nature and purpose of dialogue as an ecumenical concern. One of his articles was then published in 1972 in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* under the title *The Progress and Promise of Inter-Religious Dialogue*. He wrote six guidelines to dialogue, of which, according to him, three could be classified as bilateral dialogue and the others as multi-lateral dialogue.

²⁵⁹ Samartha 1996:71-72

These six guidelines were described by him as *tentative suggestions to dialogue* which served as inspiration to the Addis Ababa Statement, and were later adopted by the WCC committee as *Interim Guidelines*. Even though this article was only published after the Addis Ababa Assembly, it had already been written,²⁶⁰ probably after the Christian theologians' meeting in Zürich, May 1970, to evaluate the Ajaltoun meeting of March 1970'. Some of his articles were inspired by his study on Hinduism, which was published in the Indian Journal of Theology (1967).²⁶¹ His six tentative suggestions show many clear similarities with the Ajaltoun memorandum, which later had been systematized at the Zürich evaluation.

The six tentative suggestions are:

1. *The basis of inter-religious dialogue is the commitment of all partners to their respective faiths and their openness to the insights of the others. The integrity of particular religions must be recognized.*

2. *The objective of dialogue is not a superficial consensus or the finding of the most acceptable common factor. It should not lead to the dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony. It must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of Truth.*

3. *Dialogue should not be limited to mere academic discussion on religious matters. It may begin among specially delegated people within a limited compass and later on spread into wider circles involving larger numbers of people. Living together in dialogue should help communities-particularly in multi-religious societies- to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence.*

4. *It is important to emphasize that dialogue should be much wider than academic discussion of religious ideas. It is much more than verbal communication. Therefore other aspects of religion, the meaning of ritual, the significance of symbols and the experiences of devotion- should not be ignored.*

²⁶⁰ Samartha 1996:81

²⁶¹ Ariarajah 2009

Respectful attendance at one another's worship may open up new and deeper levels of communication undreamed of before.

5. With reference to strengthening the efforts for peace the following points may be noted:

a) People of different religious persuasions should be brought together to consider common human concerns in which all are involved irrespective of their religious affiliations. These may be different in different countries and social situations.

b) In the interest of justice and peace it is necessary for world religions to come out more openly on the side of the poor, the powerless and the oppressed. Mere quoting of scriptures is not enough: it should be matched by deeds. Religious values that cannot be translated in to social virtues are worse than useless where human needs are urgent. Inter-religious dialogues should promote deliberation and action on such common concerns.

c) World religious organizations should manifest greater concern to work for peace in particular situations where there are conflicts. Statements on international situations may be of less value than some symbolic actions by inter-religious group's in particular countries.

6. Inter-religious dialogues should also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life. Religions are man's responses to the mystery of existence and quests for meaning in the midst of confusion. World religious organizations should support the long-range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just separately by individuals of each religion, but also together in the larger interests of humanity.

Samartha notes that genuine dialogue demands humility and love. Dialogue therefore is both an expression of faith and a sign of hope.²⁶²

²⁶² Samartha 1996:81-82. Ariarajah elaborated this tentative suggestion further into ten aspects regarding the nature and practice of dialogue, which he gathered from Samartha's writings. Cf. Ariarajah 2009

By highlighting the Key Words of this tentative suggestion one gains a clear picture of the drift of Samartha's thinking:

Academic; commitment; communication; communities; common human concern; consensus; deliberation; discussion; false harmony; fear and distrust; human needs; integrity; interest of humanity; inter religious dialogue; justice and peace; multi religious; new dimensions of truth; openness; other faiths; partners; persuasions; pluralistic; recognized; religious; religious organizations; respective faiths; societies; superficial; study of the deeper questions; the poor, the powerless; the oppressed; to build up mutual trust; to the enrichment; work for peace; worlds; world religions.

It will be examined in the next points, how intensively those key words or the implicit ideas (as provided in the box above) were used at the WCC statements since Addis Ababa (1971), e.g. at Chiang Mai (1977) and in the Kingston revised Statement (1979). First, we shall look at the Addis Ababa Statement, or as it was called: 'Interim Guidelines to Dialogue with people of other living faiths'.

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3.4.2 The influences of Samartha's tentative suggestions in the 'interim policy statement and guidelines' to dialogue at Addis Ababa, 1971

The Addis Ababa Statement is the crystallisation of Ajaltoun and the Zürich memorandum (1970). Samartha had a main role in these two meetings, which probably inspired his tentative suggestions that were published after the Addis Ababa assembly (1971). His influence again played a role in Addis Ababa for the 'tentative suggestions' to become 'Interim guidelines to dialogue with people of other living faiths'. The influence of Samartha's six tentative suggestions are being traced here in detail (the idea of the key words is underlined in the quoted statements in the text, and mostly in footnotes) to show how what was at first posed as "tentative suggestions" became the "interim policy and guidelines" in the Addis Ababa Statement, which was later developed in the Chiang Mai theological consultation (1977), to be further revised and published as "official guidelines", as an outcome of Kingston (1979). This Statement (Kingston) was

the one that Samartha was promoting and popularising all over the world during his whole term in office at the WCC, and which became popularly known as '*Inter-faith Dialogue*.'

Samartha quoted from the Addis Ababa preamble, and emphasized in his autobiography *Between the two Cultures*:

"Through the life and witness of its constituent churches and through the activities it undertakes on their behalf, the WCC is involved in manifold relationships with people in different countries. Dialogue, understood as a human activity in which spiritual, intellectual and practical elements are involved, is a natural part of this relationship."²⁶³

The presence of the ideas and the principles of six tentative suggestions (*comp. the key words, especially points 3 and 4*) in the Addis Ababa Statement shows that the original idea of *inter-faith dialogue* was really harboured in Samartha's own concept,²⁶⁴ but he covered himself by saying that this idea was sanctioned by the WCC. In view of his concern that the concept would gain recognition in the larger ecumenical world, this strategy is quite understandable.

What Konrad Raiser said at Samartha's funeral, describing the kind of theologian Samartha was, resonated strongly with the provocative message coming from the early years of his carrier as an Indian theologian:

"...the critical function of Christian theologians in India and elsewhere is to speak and write courageously against uncritical conformity to tradition,... demand changed attitudes on the part of Christians to their neighbours in the country and in the world. They need to raise new questions, suggest new answers and broaden the theological space for critical discussion in the

²⁶³ Samartha 1996:72-73, Samartha 1971:1 Cf. "Tentative Suggestions" point 3 and 4.

²⁶⁴ "Dialogue, understood as a human activity in which spiritual, intellectual and practical elements are involved, is a natural part of this relationship" is influenced by '*dialogue should be much wider than academic discussion of religious ideas*'. Tentative suggestion point 3 and 4. Cf. Samartha 1996:81

freedom of the Spirit...”²⁶⁵

There is little doubt that Raiser quoted the message from Samartha’s own reflection about *‘rethinking Christianity in India’*.²⁶⁶ A very similar paragraph also appeared in the Addis Ababa statement, especially about the *Christian attitudes to their neighbours*, which was described in a slightly modified way as *human activity with their neighbours*. Samartha was implicitly saying that the main concept of interfaith dialogue is ‘the Christian attitude or activity to their neighbours’. In his mind, as human activity, the dialogue must involve elements *such as spiritual matters, intellectual and practical issues as a natural part of the relationship*.

In the Addis Ababa preamble, it was written further: “At the present time dialogue is inevitable because Christians everywhere now live in pluralist societies. It is urgent because all people are under common pressures in the search for justice, peace and a hopeful future. It is full of opportunity because Christians can now, in new ways, discover new aspects of the servanthood and lordship of Christ and new implications for the witness of the church in the context of moving towards a common human community”.²⁶⁷

By examining this paragraph, there is no doubt in confirming that this statement was originally from Samartha himself. Raiser had given a picture about him after his theological study and his involvement within SCM. He states that Samartha found himself in the intersection of culture and religions. His self understanding was that of being unmistakably an Indian and distinctively a Christian and that Christian life can be lived pluralistically.²⁶⁸ Samartha was actually speaking about the facts of pluralism which is faced by Christianity, and the opportunity for the Church to witness in the social context, especially in the Indian context. According to him, to witness in the Indian context is not about giving testimony to others about Jesus’ love on the cross, but moving towards a

²⁶⁵ Raiser 2008; cf. Samartha 1981:8-9 and Samartha 1971:47

²⁶⁶ Samartha 1987:45

²⁶⁷ Samartha 1971:47

²⁶⁸ Samartha 1971:47

common human concern in the community.

The Addis Ababa statement, preamble, point 2:

“Our faith in Jesus Christ, who became human for all humanity in all times, sustains us in dialogue. The expression of this faith in the life and witness of the church leads us to develop relationships with people of different faiths and ideologies.”²⁶⁹

This statement also comes from Samartha himself. In fact, we can find the same statement over and over in his writing, including in his address to Addis Ababa 1971. God’s mission of love in Jesus Christ is to all humanity. Jesus became human for all humanity in all times. In the context of mission, Samartha call this the wholeness of mission.²⁷⁰ He quoted a part of the Addis Ababa statement to justify his concept about the universality of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit: “Jesus Christ, who makes us free, draws us out of isolation into genuine dialogue into which we enter with faith in the promise that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.”²⁷¹

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This had been affirmed already by the Uppsala Assembly (1968) which states: “The meeting with people of other faiths and no faith must lead to dialogue. A Christian’s dialogue with another implies neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of one’s own commitment to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble. Such a dialogue presupposes a spiritual renewal in the churches and is, at the same time, itself a sign of such renewal in our churches and our societies”.²⁷²

This paragraph from the Uppsala statement is also originally from Samartha. He very strongly emphasised that the Holy Spirit is mysteriously working also in

²⁶⁹ Samartha 1971:48

²⁷⁰ Samartha 1981:80

²⁷¹ Samartha 1996:72

²⁷² Samartha 1996:72-73

other Faiths. He believes that the Holy Spirit can not be bound by visible communal walls or limited by religion. When comparing text to text, as above, there remains no doubt that Samartha himself was the main director of the Addis Ababa Statement (1971) about Christian dialogue with men of other living Faiths. It becomes quite evident that his 'six tentative suggestions' were repeated over and over, in some form or another, in each significant statement on dialogue, since Uppsala (1968), right through to Addis Ababa (1971) and Chiang Mai (1977).²⁷³

In the Uppsala Assembly (1968) and at Addis Ababa (1971), the uniqueness of Christ was still undeniable, but later, since Chiang Mai (1977), Samartha seems to be ignoring, or at least neglecting, the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity. These aspects seem to be denied in the later development of his concept. In this he was followed by Knitter and John Hicks (to be discussed in the next chapter).

Following the formulation of Addis Ababa about dialogue with other people of living faiths, the Addis Ababa Committee addressed three main issues that need to be studied together by the churches:

1. What are the fundamental theological implications of dialogue? This includes the questions of God's salvation offered in Jesus Christ and His presence and work in the whole world, in particular, in the lives and traditions of people of other faiths and ideologies.
2. What is the relation between dialogue, mission and witness?
3. How is dialogue to be understood and practiced in the context of indigenisation: between gospel and culture for the fear of syncretism?

In response to these notes, Samartha then gave three comments for the churches to better understand the insight of Addis Ababa statements:

First, the servant-hood of Christ was put alongside his lordship as the foundation for dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies. This was in

²⁷³ Samartha 1996:81 Cf. Samartha 1971a:107-124 and 1971b:33-43 for the text.

accordance with the Christ-centric basis of the WCC. He reported that the implication for dialogue of this combination was not sufficiently recognised at the time. He insisted that servant-hood emphasises the humanity of Jesus Christ, the *kenosis* or self-emptying of God, who puts himself alongside human beings. He goes further by stating that when the lordship of Christ is put forward without being sufficiently qualified by servant-hood, it will lead to proclamations about the “supremacy”, “uniqueness” and “finality” of Christ, formulated in such a way as to make dialogue difficult, if not impossible in the context of plurality.

Second: the implications of the promise of Jesus that the Holy Spirit would “leads us into all truth” are explained by Samartha along the lines of an active relationship between the universal activity of the Spirit of God in all creation and in the lives of people of other faiths.

Third: the qualifying adjective “interim” describing the policy statement disturbed Samartha at the time. He felt that it would inhibit the churches, particularly those in Asia, to move forward with confidence and hope in seeking new relationships with people of other faiths.²⁷⁴

From what is revealed here, it is quite clear that he really pushed WCC to implement with confidence his idea about ‘dialogue with people of other living faiths’, especially since the second Vatican Council had already brought out its declaration on the Church’s relation to Non-Christian Religions. He said “I felt that the WCC was being more cautious and showing less confidence than the Vatican.”²⁷⁵

The development of Samartha’s concept of Dialogue with people of other faiths, since the Ajaltoun meeting (1970) up to the to Addis Ababa statement (1971), can be described as follows: “*God’s incarnation in Christ is the foundation of Christian Dialogue with other Faiths*”.

Here the crucial word is ‘incarnation’, which Samartha understands as equal to ‘self-emptying’ (*kenosis*). He was so convinced that self-emptying of God

²⁷⁴ Samartha 1996:75

(*kenosis*) is evidence that God himself works alongside all human beings. On the basis of this universal application of *incarnation* as *kenosis*, he claims that there could be no more division between religions or cultures, because Christ had broken the wall and Christ himself brings all human beings to the Father.

Johnson's summary, in his report *From Addis Ababa to Nairobi*, of the new accents that gained ground in the Addis Ababa Statement (1971), on the basis of what previously was accepted as the interim policy statement, and served as guidelines of dialogue for the Addis Ababa consultation, reads as follows:

"It bases itself on our faith in Jesus Christ who makes us free and draws us out of isolation into genuine dialogue into which we enter with faith in the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth". It further states that dialogue offers the promise of discovering new dimensions of understanding our faith, opportunities for new relationships between Christians and men of other faiths, and possibilities where our Christian faith can be tested and strengthened, It also envisages cooperation with people of other faiths and ideologies on specific issues which will involve not only study but also common action".²⁷⁶

The Addis Ababa statement was seen as the product of a process of evolution in the concept of dialogue, from Ajaltoun (1970), resulting in acceptance of the fact that the Churches are now free to dialogue with other neighbours without hindrance or isolation by the wall of any tradition or religion or culture. Samartha notes therefore, that the meeting in Addis Ababa was not 'how to replace other religions by Christianity', but 'how to relate the living faith of Christians to the living faiths of other people in a pluralistic world'. The question according to him was more theological than missiological: how could those who had so far been regarded as objects of Christian mission instead be seen as partners in a global community confronting urgent issues of peace, justice and the survival of life in the cosmos?²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Samartha 1996:75

²⁷⁶ Johnson 1975:99

Six years later, the Addis Ababa statement, now serving as 'interim guideline and policy to dialogue with people of other living faith', was revised at the Chiang Mai theological consultation (1977). Here, at Chiang Mai, the statement was formally approved and became 'policy and guideline to dialogue with people of other living faiths'. The significant change, underlining the new development at Chiang Mai, is that the concept of 'dialogue with people of other faiths' was no longer about 'dialogue related to mission or evangelism', as it was still understood in the New Delhi Assembly (1961), but moved away to an exclusive focus on 'social concerns, such as justice, peace, ecology and harmony'.

3.4.3 Samartha's influences on the Chiang Mai Statement 1977: from 'interim' to 'permanent'

The Chiang Mai Theological Consultation in Thailand (1977) produced a document with three main parts.²⁷⁸ The Addis Ababa statement (interim guideline) was only put into the second part of the Chiang Mai Statement, under the topic 'the reason for dialogue', while the new statement, which was to become the 'permanent guide line', was started with the new topic: "dialogue on community". This thesis therefore only focuses on Dialogue with other Living Faiths, as discussed in Chiang Mai (Part II and III), to assess to what an extent the key ideas and principle from 'six tentative suggestions' are still present in each statement. The main ideas from Samartha's tentative suggestion will be written in the following sub-points, and it will be related to each point from Chiang Mai which it inspired. The further assessment on Samartha's concepts will be made in chapter 4.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Samartha 1996:64

²⁷⁸ *Part I: On community*, which is divided in two points: a) Communities and the community of humankind; b) the Christian community: the Churches and the Church. This part was described in points 1 to 16. *Part II: On Dialogue*, which is divided in three points, deals with c) Reasons for dialogue, d) the theological significance of people of other faiths and ideologies, and e) Syncretism. This part was described in points 17 to 30. *Part III: Group reports*: group A was about Christian-Jewish-Muslim Relations, group B was about Christian-Buddhist-Hindu Relations and Group C was about Christian concern in traditional Religions and Cultures, while group D was about Ideologies. Cf. Samartha 1977:134ff.

²⁷⁹ The full Chiang Mai statement can be consulted in Samartha 1977:134-169.

a) *The Basis of inter-religious dialogue is commitment and openness.*²⁸⁰

The words '*commitment and openness*' is 'a trade mark' of Samartha since his earliest involvement with the WCC. This idea was found in the Addis Ababa preamble, but was also foundational to the whole Chiang Mai statement about dialogue. This point was emphasised specifically at the Chiang Mai statement, as from point 17: "...we need to build up our relationships...for mutual understanding..." and "...we are felt called to engage in dialogue towards the realization of a wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized." We find Samartha's idea about *openness* here formulated in a very strong and clear way.²⁸¹

The same idea, about commitment and openness also appears in the Chiang Mai Statement, point 18: "...we recognize dialogue as a welcome way in which we can be more obedient to the commandment of Decalogue..."²⁸² In point 19:

²⁸⁰ Samartha's tentative suggestion point 1 Cf. Samartha 1996:81

²⁸¹ 17. We consider the term "dialogue in community" to be useful in that it gives concreteness to our thinking. Moreover it focuses attention on our reasons for being in dialogue, which we identified in two related categories. Most of us today live out our lives as Christians in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than our own. We live in families sometimes of mixed faiths and ideologies; we live as neighbours in the same towns and villages, we need to build up our relationships expressing mutual human care and searching for mutual understanding. This sort of dialogue is very practical, concerned with the problems of modern life-the social, political, ecological and, above all, the ordinary and familiar. We are conscious also of our concerns beyond the local, and thus feel called to engage in dialogue towards the realization of wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized. This leads us in turn to a dialogue between communities, in which we tackle issues of national and international concern, for the sake of the vision of world-wide "community of communities". Cf. Samartha 1977:143-145

²⁸² 18. No more than "community" can "dialogue" be precisely defined. Rather it has to be described, experienced and developed as a life style. As human beings we have learned to speak; we talk, chatter, give and receive information, have discussions - all this is not yet dialogue. Now and then it happens that out of our talking and our relationships arises a deeper encounter, an opening up, in more than intellectual terms, of each to the concerns of the other. This is experienced by families and friends, and by those who share the same faiths or ideology: but we are particularly concerned with the dialogue which reaches across differences of faith, ideology and culture, even where the partners in dialogue do not agree on important central aspect of human life. We recognize dialogue as a welcome way in which we can be more obedient to the commandment of Decalogue: 'Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbour'. We need dialogue to help us not to disfigure the image of our neighbours of different faiths and ideologies. It has been the experience of many in our consultation that this dialogue is indeed possible on the basis of a mutual trust and a respect for the integrity of each participant's identities. Samartha 1977:144

“... *In dialogue we actively respond to the command “to love God and your neighbour as your self...”* ²⁸³ In point 20: “... *as we enter dialogue with our commitment to Jesus Christ ...the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness...*” ²⁸⁴ In point 22: “...*to proceed dialogue with repentance, because we know how easily we misconstrue God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, betraying it in our actions and posturing as the owners of God’s truth rather than, as in fact we are, the undeserving recipients of grace...*” ²⁸⁵ The same idea also found at point, 23, 24, and 25. ²⁸⁶

²⁸³ 19. We see dialogue, therefore, as a fundamental part of our Christian service within community. *In dialogue we actively respond to the command “to love God and your neighbour as yourself”.* As an expression of our love our engagement in dialogue testifies to the love we have experienced in Christ. It is our joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and our participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus we soundly reject any idea of “dialogue in community” as a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. We adopt it rather as a means of living out our faith in Christ in service of community with our neighbours. Cf. Samartha 1977:144

²⁸⁴ 20. In this sense we endorse dialogue as having a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service. But by “distinctive” we do not mean totally different or separate. In dialogue we seek “to speak the truth in a spirit of love”, not naively “to be tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine”. (Eph.4:14-15). In giving our witness we recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as we enter dialogue with our commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member churches of the WCC we feel able with integrity to comment the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims, to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue.

²⁸⁵ 22. Approaching the theological questions in this spirit we felt strongly the need to proceed...with repentance, because we know how easily we misconstrue God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, betraying it in our actions and posturing as the owners of God’s truth rather than, as in fact we are, the undeserving recipients of grace; with humility, because we so often perceive in people of other faiths and ideologies a spirituality, dedication, compassion and a wisdom which should forbid us making judgments about them as thought from a position of superiority; in particular we should avoid using ideas such as “anonymous Christians”, “the Christian presence”, “the unknown Christ”, in ways not intended by those who proposed them for theological purposes or in ways prejudicial to the self-understanding of Christians and others; with joy, because it is not ourselves we preach; it is Jesus Christ, perceived by many peoples of living faiths and ideologies as prophet, holy one, teacher, example; but confessed by us as Lord and Saviour, Himself the faithful witness and the coming one (Rev. 1:5-7); with integrity, because we do not enter into dialogue with others except in this penitent and humble joyfulness in our Lord Jesus Christ, making clear to others our own experience and witness, even as we seek to hear from them their expressions of deepest conviction and insight.

²⁸⁶ Read Samartha 1977:146-147

- b) *The objective of dialogue must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of truth.*²⁸⁷

The idea of the tentative suggestions, point 2, is appearing also in the Chiang Mai Statement, point 17 and 20. At point 17 the idea *the objective of dialogue must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimension of truth*, was emphasised in the statement "...we need to build up our relationship...and searching for mutual understanding."²⁸⁸ In point 20 it was emphasised "...In dialogue we seek to 'speak the truth in a spirit of love'."²⁸⁹ The parallel idea is found also at the point 21: "...we should examine how their faiths and ideologies have given direction to their daily living and actually affect dialogue on both sides."²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Samartha's tentative suggestion, point 2; cf. Samartha 1996:81

²⁸⁸ 17. We consider the term "dialogue in community" to be useful in that it gives concreteness to our thinking. Moreover it focuses attention on our reasons for being in dialogue, which we identified in two related categories. Most of us today live out our lives as Christians in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than our own. We live in families sometimes of mixed faiths and ideologies; we live as neighbours in the same towns and villages, we need to build up our relationships expressing mutual human care and searching for mutual understanding. This sort of dialogue is very practical, concerned with the problems of modern life-the social, political, ecological and, above all, the ordinary and familiar. We are conscious also of our concerns beyond the local, and thus feel called to engage in dialogue towards the realization of wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized. This leads us in turn to a dialogue between communities, in which we tackle issues of national and international concern, for the sake of the vision of world-wide "community of communities". Cf. Samartha (1977:143-145)

²⁸⁹ 20. In this sense we endorse dialogue as having a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service. But by "distinctive" we do not mean totally different or separate. In dialogue we seek "to speak the truth in a spirit of love", not naively "to be tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine". (Eph.4:14-15). In giving our witness we recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as we enter dialogue with our commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member churches of the WCC we feel able with integrity to comment the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims, to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue.

²⁹⁰ 21. As we engage thus in faithful "dialogue in community" with peoples of other faiths and ideologies we can not avoid asking ourselves penetrating questions about their place in the activity of God in history. We should remind ourselves, however, that we ask this question not in theory, but in terms of what God may be doing in the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women who live in and seek community together with ourselves, but along different ways. So we should think always in terms of people of other faiths and ideologies rather than of theoretical, impersonal systems. We should examine how their faiths and ideologies have given direction to their daily living and actually affect dialogue on both sides. Cf. Samartha 1977:145

- c) *Dialogue should not be limited to mere academic discussion on religious matters, but should help communities to shed their fear and distrust of each other, and to build up mutual trust and confidence.*²⁹¹

The ideas from point 3 and 4 in Samartha's tentative suggestion are inspiring Chiang Mai point 18, 19, 20 and 21. The relevant points are "...that out of our talking and our relationships arises a deeper encounter, an opening up, in more than intellectual terms, of each to the concern of the other."²⁹² At point 19 it reads: "...Thus we soundly reject any idea of "dialogue in community" as secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy."²⁹³ Point 20 is emphasising "...at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims..."²⁹⁴ In point 21, it is strongly emphasised that "...we should remind

²⁹¹Samartha's tentative suggestion point 3. Cf. Samartha 1996:81

²⁹² 18. No more than "community" can "dialogue" be precisely defined. Rather it has to be described, experienced and developed as a life style. As human beings we have learned to speak; we talk, chatter, give and receive information, have discussions-all this is not yet dialogue. Now and then it happens that out of our talking and our relationships arises a deeper encounter, an opening up, in more than intellectual terms, of each to the concerns of the other. This is experienced by families and friends, and by those who share the same faiths or ideology: but we are particularly concerned with the dialogue which reaches across differences of faith, ideology and culture, even where the partners in dialogue do not agree on important central aspect of human life. We recognize dialogue as a well come way in which we can be more obedient to the commandment of Decalogue: 'Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbour'. We need dialogue to help us not to disfigure the image of our neighbours of different faiths and ideologies. It has been the experience of many in our consultation that this dialogue is indeed possible on the basis of a mutual trust and a respect for the integrity of each participant's identities. Samartha 1977:144

²⁹³ 19. We see dialogue, therefore, as a fundamental part of our Christian service within community. In dialogue we actively respond to the command "to love God and your neighbour as yourself". As an expression of our love our engagement in dialogue testifies to the love we have experienced in Christ. It is our joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and our participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus we soundly reject any idea of "dialogue in community" as a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. We adopt it rather as a means of living out our faith in Christ in service of community with our neighbours. Cf. Samartha 1977:144

²⁹⁴ 20. In this sense we endorse dialogue as having a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service. But by "distinctive" we do not mean totally different or separate. In dialogue we seek "to speak the truth in a spirit of love", not naively "to be tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine". (Eph.4:14-15). In giving our witness we recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as we enter dialogue with our commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member churches of the WCC we feel able with integrity to comment the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims, to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue. Cf. Samartha 1977:145

ourselves...that we ask this question not in theory, but in terms of what God may be doing...So we should think always in term of people of other faiths and ideologies rather than of theoretical, impersonal system.”²⁹⁵

d) *Dialogue must be strengthening the efforts for justice and peace, and together to consider common human concerns.*²⁹⁶

Samartha always emphasised that the human common concern, especially justice and peace in the community as the goal of dialogue and as Christian mission in the world. The idea from point 5 of his tentative suggestion is also inspiring Chiang Mai statement point 17: “...expressing mutual human care... concerned with the problems of modern life- the social, political, we feel called to engage in dialogue towards the realization of wider community in which peace and justice may be more realized.”²⁹⁷ This idea is also appearing at point 19: “...we adopt it (dialogue in community) rather as a means of living out our faith in Christ in service of community with our neighbours”.²⁹⁸ This principle also inspiring point 21: “As we engage thus in faithful “dialogue in community”

²⁹⁵ 21. As we engage thus in faithful “dialogue in community” with peoples of other faiths and ideologies we can not avoid asking ourselves penetrating questions about their place in the activity of God in history. We should remind ourselves, however, that we ask this question not in theory, but in terms of what God may be doing in the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women who live in and seek community together with ourselves, but along different ways. So we should think always in terms of people of other faiths and ideologies rather than of theoretical, impersonal systems. We should examine how their faiths and ideologies have given direction to their daily living and actually affect dialogue on both sides.

²⁹⁶ Samartha’s tentative suggestion point 5. Cf. Samartha 1996:81

²⁹⁷ 17. We consider the term “dialogue in community” to be useful in that it gives concreteness to our thinking. Moreover it focuses attention on our reasons for being in dialogue, which we identified in two related categories. Most of us today live out our lives as Christians in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than our own. We live in families sometimes of mixed faiths and ideologies; we live as neighbours in the same towns and villages, we need to build up our relationships expressing mutual human care and searching for mutual understanding. This sort of dialogue is very practical, concerned with the problems of modern life-the social, political, ecological and, above all, the ordinary and familiar. We are conscious also of our concerns beyond the local, and thus feel called to engage in dialogue towards the realization of wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized. This leads us in turn to a dialogue between communities, in which we tackle issues of national and international concern, for the sake of the vision of world-wide “community of communities”. Cf. Samartha (1977:143-145)

²⁹⁸ 19. We see dialogue, therefore, as a fundamental part of our Christian service within community. In dialogue we actively respond to the command “to love God and your neighbour as yourself”. As an expression of our love our engagement in dialogue testifies to the love we have experienced in Christ. It is our joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and our participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus we soundly reject any idea of “dialogue in community” as a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. We adopt it rather as a means of living out our faith in Christ in service of community with our neighbours. Cf. Samartha 1977:144

with people of other faiths and ideologies we cannot avoid asking ourselves penetrating questions about their place in the activity of God in history...".²⁹⁹

e) *Inter-religious dialogue must also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life*³⁰⁰.

Samartha also emphasised that Christian must open to study further other religions besides examining Christianity for the success of dialogue in the community. His tentative suggestion point 6 is inspiring Chiang Mai statement point 23: that the Bible is to be used creatively as the basis for Christian reflection on the issues that arise in community without assuming it as a reference point for our partners;³⁰¹ that we must also ask: "what is the relationship between God's universal action in creation and his redemptive action in Jesus Christ? "...and the fact that our partners in dialogue have also other starting points and resources, both in holy and traditions of teaching."³⁰²

²⁹⁹ 21. *As we engage thus in faithful "dialogue in community" with peoples of other faiths and ideologies we can not avoid asking ourselves penetrating questions about their place in the activity of God in history. We should remind ourselves, however, that we ask this question not in theory, but in terms of what God may be doing in the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women who live in and seek community together with ourselves, but along different ways. So we should think always in terms of people of other faiths and ideologies rather than of theoretical, impersonal systems. We should examine how their faiths and ideologies have given direction to their daily living and actually affect dialogue on both sides.*

³⁰⁰ Samartha's tentative suggestion point 6. Cf. Samartha 1996:82.

³⁰¹ 23. Only in this spirit can we hope to address ourselves creatively to the theological questions posed by others faiths and ideologies. *Our theological discussions in the conference aided the growth of understanding between Christian participants from different backgrounds in the following areas in particular: that renewed attention must be given to the doctrine of creation, particularly as we may see it illuminated by the Christian understanding of God as one Holy Trinity and by the resurrection and glorification of Christ; That fundamental questions about the nature and activity of God and the doctrine of the Spirit arise in dialogue, and the Christological discussion must take place with this comprehensive reference; that the bible, with all the aids to its understanding and appropriation from the churches' tradition and scholarship, is to be used creatively as the basis for our Christian reflection on the issues that arise, giving us both encouragement and warning, though we can not assume it as a reference point for our partners;*

That the theological problems of church unity also need to be viewed in relation to our concern for dialogue; that the search for common ground should not be a reduction of living faiths and ideologies to a lowest common denominator, but a quest for that of spirit and life which is only found at those deepest levels of human experience, variously symbolized and conceptualized in different faiths.

³⁰² 24. We look forwards to further fruitful discussion of these issues (among many others) within our Christian circles but also in situations of dialogue. There were other questions where we found agreement more difficult and sometimes impossible, but these also we would commend for further theological attention: *What is the relationship between God's universal action in creation and his redemptive action in Jesus Christ? Are we to speak of God's work in the lives of all men and women only in tentative terms of hope that they may experience something of him or more positively in terms of God's self disclosure to people of living faiths*

f) *Samartha and Syncretism*

In his tentative suggestion, Samartha did not explicitly mention anything about syncretism, while in the Chiang Mai statement, points 25 to 30, there is a long description about this issue in relation to Christian dialogue with people of other faiths.³⁰³ Nevertheless, he implicitly addressed this issue in point 4 of the

and in the struggle of human life and ideology? How are we to find from the bible criteria in our approach to people of other faiths and ideologies, recognizing as we must, both the authority accorded to the Bible by Christians of all centuries, particular questions concerning the authority of the Old Testament for the Christian Church, and the fact that our partners in dialogue have other starting points and resources, both in holy books and traditions of teaching? What is the biblical view and Christian experience of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and is it right and helpful to understand the work of God outside the Church in terms of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?

³⁰³ 25. In dialogue we are called to be adventurous, and we must be ready to take risks; but also to be watchful and wide awake for God. Is syncretism a danger for which we must be alert? Cf. Samartha (1977:147)

26. We first affirm positively the need for a genuine "translation" of the Christian message in every time and place. This need can be recognized as soon as the Bible translators begin their work in a particular language and have to weigh the cultural and philosophical overtones and undertones of its words. But there is also a wider "translation" of the message by expressing it in artistic, dramatic, liturgical and above all in relational terms which are appropriate to convey the authenticity of the message in ways authentically indigenous, often through the theologically tested use of the symbols and concepts of a particular community. Cf. Samartha (1977:147-148)

27. We speak here of "translation" where some have spoken of a proper of Christ centred syncretism. We recognize the intention thus to rescue the word "syncretism" but we believe that after its previous uses in Christian debate, by now it conveys a negative evaluation. This is clearly the case if it means, as the Nairobi Assembly used the word, "conscious or unconscious human attempts to create a new religion composed of elements taken from different religions": in this sense we believe that syncretism is also rejected by our dialogue partners, although we recognize that there may be some who in their alienation are seeking help from many sources and do not regard syncretism negatively. Cf. Samartha (1977:148)

28. The word "syncretism" is, however, more widely used than at Nairobi and particularly to warn against two other dangers. The first danger is that in attempting to "translate" the Christian message for a cultural setting or in approach to faiths and ideologies with which we are in dialogue partnership, we may go too far and compromise the authenticity of Christian faith and life. We have the Bible to guide us but there is always risk in seeking to express the Gospel in a new setting: for instance, the early Christian struggle against heresy in the debate with Gnosticism; or the compromising of the Gospel in the so-called "civil religions" of the West. It is salutary to examine such examples lest it be supposed that syncretism is a risk endemic only in certain continents.

A second danger is that of interpreting a living faith not in its own terms but in terms of another faith or ideology. This is illegitimate on the principles of both scholarship and dialogue. In this way we may "concretize" Christianity by seeing it as only a variant of some other approach to God, or we may wrongly "syncretize" another faith by seeing it only as a partial understanding of what we Christians believe that we know in full. There is particular need for further study of the way in which this kind of syncretism can take place between a faith and an ideology. Cf. Samartha (1977:148-149)

29. We recognize both that these are real dangers and that there will be differences of judgment among Christians and between churches as to when these dangers are threatening, or have actually overtaken particular Christian enterprises. We may sum up our conclusions on this question of syncretism in terms of the Thai story that the little lizards who climb the house walls in Chiang Mai are saying by their cries both "welcome" and "take care". We welcome the venture of exploratory faith; we warn each other "Take care". Cf. Samartha (1977:149)

tentative suggestion), when he states: "...other aspects of religion - the meaning of ritual, the significance of symbols and the experiences of devotion should not be ignored...".³⁰⁴ In point 6 he says: "Inter-religious dialogues should also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life...".³⁰⁵ These are the evidence that this part also aroused from Samartha's concept to Chiang Mai. Samartha has no problem with syncretism, because his context of dialogue with Christianity is his own country, India, where Hinduism culturally is mixed with polytheism.

The Chiang Mai statement about 'Dialogue in Community' officially included only the introduction, together with parts I and II, while Part III, consisting of reports of Groups on specific topics, was received by the whole consultation as a record of both experiences and insights in specific contexts and on particular issues. Because of its nature, this part was not adopted as statements (like points 1 to 30), but was presented to the churches for consideration and evaluation in the light of the official statement on dialogue in community.

3.4.4 Samartha's influence on the Kingston Statements, 1979

The Chiang Mai statement (1977) and a set of Guidelines prepared on the basis of it, were put together and published in the form of a booklet in 1979 in

30. This mutual warning developed into a positive attitude as our consultation progressed. Within the ecumenical movement the practice of dialogue and the giving of witness have some times evoked mutual suspicion. God is very patient with us, giving us space and time for discovery of his way and its riches (cf. II Pet. 3:9). In our discussion we sensed afresh the need to give one another space and time-space and time, for instance, in India or Ghana to explore the richness of the Gospel in a setting very different from that of "Hellenized" Europe; space and time, for instance, in Korea to develop the present striking evangelistic work of the churches; space and time, for instance, in Europe to adjust to a new situation in which secularity is now being changed by new religious interest, now expressed in traditional terms. We need to recognize the diversity of dialogue itself in its particular contexts and in relation to specific discussions which formed the third main section of our consultation. Cf. Samartha (1977:149).

³⁰⁴ 4. It is important to emphasize that dialogue should be much wider than academic discussion of religious ideas. It is much more than verbal communication. *Therefore other aspects of religion, the meaning of ritual, the significance of symbols and the experiences of devotion-should not be ignored.* Respectful attendance at one another's worship may open up new and deeper levels of communication undreamed of before.

³⁰⁵ 6. *Inter-religious dialogues should also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life.* Religions are man's responses to the mystery of existence and quests for meaning in the midst of confusion. World religious organizations should support the long-range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just separately by individuals of each religion, but also together in the larger interests of humanity.

Kingston, Jamaica, which was widely distributed.³⁰⁶

There are two main things that were changed in the Kingston Statement, when compared with the original statement of *Chiang Mai*. *First*, the words “we” in Chiang Mai statement which was inherited from the original Addis Ababa statement had been changed to “they”. *Second*, the explicit mention of the statement as “our statement” from Chiang Mai had changed to become the story of “their statement”. These changes brought about a significant change in the psychological attitude towards dialogue. To illustrate this I quote here a certain statement from the Kingston Statement, ‘On Dialogue’ (from point 16), which was revised as follows in the Chiang Mai statement from point 17³⁰⁷

Chiang Mai Statement: The Reason for Dialogue:

“17. We consider the term “dialogue in community” to be useful in that it gives concreteness to our thinking. Moreover it focuses attention on our reasons for being in dialogue, which we identified in two related categories. Most of us today live out our lives as Christians in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than our own. We live in families sometimes of mixed faiths and ideologies; we live as neighbours in the same towns and villages, we need to build up our relationships expressing mutual human care and searching for mutual understanding. This sort of dialogue is very practical, concerned with the problems of modern life-the social, political, ecological and, above all, the ordinary and familiar. We are conscious also of our concerns beyond the local, and thus feel called to engage in dialogue towards the realization of wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized. This leads us in turn to a dialogue between communities, in which we tackle issues of national and international concern, for the sake of the vision of world-wide “community of communities”.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Samartha 1996:130

³⁰⁷ The reason of changing this number is because at the WCC Central Committee meeting in Kingston 1979, The Chiang Mai statement Part I about “On community” was revised from 1 to 16 points became 1 to 15 points. Thus, Part II about “On dialogue” automatically started from 16 in Scherer and Bevans. (Cf. Samartha 1977:136-143 and Scherer and Bevans 1992:12)

³⁰⁸ Samartha 1977:143

The Kingston Statement: On dialogue.³⁰⁹

16. The term “dialogue in community” is useful in that it gives concreteness to *Christian* reflection on dialogue. Moreover it focuses attention on the reasons for being in dialogue, which can be identified in two related categories. *Most Christians* today live out *their lives* in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than *their own*. *They* live in families sometimes of mixed faiths and ideologies; *they* live as neighbours in the same towns and villages; *they* need to build up *their relationships* expressing mutual human care and searching for mutual understanding. This sort of dialogue is very practical, concerned with the problems of modern life- the social, political, ecological, and, above all, the ordinary and familiar. But there are concerns beyond the local which require Christians to engage in dialogue towards the realization of a wider community in which peace and justice may be more fully realized. This leads in turn to a dialogue between communities, in which issues of national and international concern are tackled.³¹⁰

The other evidences of Samartha's influence also on the revision of the statement in Kingston, 1979, was that in each point of Kingston, we still find the same statement from Samartha, after he found his new hermeneutical approach from the Indian context (as described earlier, in 3.3.1). In point 17 of Kingston, for instance, it reads: “...Dialogue can be recognised as a welcome way of obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue: ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour’. Dialogue helps us not to disfigure the image of our neighbours of different faiths and ideologies.”³¹¹

³⁰⁹ The complete Kingston Statement can be read in Scherer and Bevans 1992:12-17.

³¹⁰ Compare the statement at Scherer and Bevans (1992:13) with the original Chiang Mai 1977, as given above (Samartha 1977:143-144).

³¹¹ 17. No more than “community” can “dialogue” be precisely defined. Rather it has to be described, experienced and developed as a life stile. As human beings we have learned to speak; we talk, chatter, give and receive information, have discussions- all this is not yet dialogue. Now and then it happens that out of our talking and our relationships arises a deeper encounter and opening up, in more than intellectual terms, of each to the concerns of the other. This is experienced by families and friends, and by those who share the same faiths, or ideology; but we are particularly concerned with the dialogue which reaches across differences of faith, ideology and culture, even where the partners in dialogue do not agree on important central aspects of human life. *Dialogue can be recognized as a welcome way of obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour”. Dialogue helps us not to disfigure the image of our neighbours of different faiths and ideologies.*

In point 18, “Dialogue, therefore, is a fundamental part of Christian service within community. In dialogue Christians actively respond to the command to “love God and your neighbour as yourself”,³¹² and in point 19, that in dialogue, Christians seek to speak the truth in a spirit of love. Christians enter dialogue with their commitment to Jesus Christ....in dialogue "that we come not as manipulator but as genuine fellow pilgrims".³¹³

Details about point D. ‘The theological significance of people of other Faiths and ideologies’, and point E, about ‘Syncretism’ (Kingston Statement), will not be re-quoted here, but will be analysed in chapter IV.

3.4.5 Samartha’s influences in the Canberra Statements

In 1991, at the seventh WCC Assembly in Canberra, Australia, Samartha wrote the special article *the Holy Spirit and People of Other Faiths* as related to the main theme of the Assembly, “Come Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation”. Samartha’s presence at Canberra was no longer as WCC staff member. He was already retired since 1980 and left Geneva in 1981. He, nevertheless, still had influence in promoting the dialogue with people of other Faiths as an ex-Director for Dialogue WCC sub-unit. In Canberra 1991, again the WCC

It has been the experience of many Christians that this dialogue is indeed possible on the basis of a mutual trust and a respect for the integrity of each participant’s identity.

³¹² 18. Dialogue, therefore, is a fundamental part of Christian service within community. In dialogue Christians actively respond to the command to “love God and your neighbour as yourself”. As an expression of love engagement in dialogue testifies to the love experienced in Christ. It is a joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and participation with all who are allies of life seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus “dialogue in community” is not a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. Rather it is a means of living our faith in Christ in service of community with one’s neighbours.

³¹³ 19. In this sense dialogue has a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service. But “distinctive” does not mean totally different or separate. In dialogue Christians seek “to speak the truth in a spirit of love”, not naively “to be tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14-15). In giving their witness they recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as Christians enter dialogue with their commitment to Jesus Christ, time and time again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member churches of the WCC we feel able with integrity to commend the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow pilgrims, to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue.

statement about “dialogue” was revised for the last time, but without a significant change from its first published format, at Kingston (1979).

3.4.6 Samartha’s concept of Christian Dialogue with Muslims

Samartha’s concept of dialogue between Christians and Muslims was first influenced by his national context of India where he was brought up, which was culturally determined by Hinduism. His old perception about Muslims therefore was, that they are just the same as the Christians (from his old congregation) who kept themselves on the outside of Hinduism culturally and having different responses to the ‘mystery of life and death’ (as one of the strong doctrines in Hinduism), even though they themselves were in fact converts from Hinduism.³¹⁴

When he was at the Madras University and involved with the Student Christian Movement (SCM), he used to be friends with many academicians from different religions, including Muslims.³¹⁵ His horizon on other religions, including Islam was enlarged since he worked within WCC in promoting the idea of “Inter-religious dialogue” globally. He insisted that the future of Christianity in India lies in liberal Christians co-operating with liberal Hindus in combating Hindu fanaticism. He then regarded himself as a liberal Christian in that sense. “I regard myself as a liberal Christian in this sense. I am Hindu by culture, Christian by faith, Indian by citizenship and ecumenical by choice”.³¹⁶

Based on this “declaration”, it is obvious that Samartha now had a totally different view of other religions, including Islam, compared to his old perspective when he was still in his father’s congregation. His ideas on Christian dialogue with Islam can be found in the statements since the first meeting between Christian leaders and Muslim leaders at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham (1968); Broumana 1972 and Chambesy 1976.

³¹⁴ Samartha 1996:5

³¹⁵ Samartha 1996:20

a) *Samartha at the Dialogue in Birmingham (1968).*

This meeting was the first one since the WCC established its sub-unit Dialogue as one of their programmes related to other religions, and with Samartha as the first director. From the meeting in Selly Oak Colleges, we can identify some particular points that Samartha developed in his book:³¹⁷

“We must never deal with each other simply as stereotyped or pigeonholed representatives of another tradition. We must seek to know each other and respect each other as individuals... *We should be less conscious of our different labels as ‘Christians’ and ‘Muslims’ than of our faithfulness to the one God.*”³¹⁸

The italic writing is indicating Samartha’s own concept.

This report came out of the participants after their historical reflection on the past history between Christian and Muslim (including of course the crusades in the 11th century). The emphasis at this meeting focused on reconciliation and seeking the common ground between the two groups. The most interesting point in this report, is that the participants were bound with the word ‘we’.

Samartha insisted that there are two main points from Selly Oak for Christian-Muslim dialogue: *the first* is to find the certain beliefs common to both traditions, and *the second* is the urgent need to continue the friendly relations between Christians and Muslims, as groups, but also at the individual level. He emphasized that reconciliation and peace should be the purpose of dialogue, but he seems not to have been aware of the fact that many Muslims were taught to be a militant and well trained in disputing with Christians about their beliefs, in order to prove that Christianity is wrong and Islam is right, even though the issues are in fact related to common beliefs in both religions. In other words, peace and a friendly relations between Christians and Muslims will be only a dream when one side claims its own righteousness, but not God’s

³¹⁶ Samartha 1966:161

³¹⁷ Samartha 1981:4

³¹⁸ Since Christians dialogue with Muslims in Birmingham (1968) where Roman Catholic and Orthodox representatives were also present, Samartha often declared that Christians and Muslims worship the same God (the only God) who he sometimes introduced as the Mystery or the Ultimate Reality. Cf. Samartha 1981:4

righteousness.

b) *Samartha and dialogue in the Broumana Statement*

The new developments since Uppsala (1968) was that the Christian-Muslim dialogues had been going on at both local and international level, but also that a new relationship between Jews and the WCC had been developing.

One of the most important points of the declaration on Christian-Muslim dialogue in Broumana (1972) was the *Memorandum In search of understanding and Cooperation - Christian and Muslim Contribution*,³¹⁹ especially point 3 about 'guiding principles for our dialogue' which also Johnson quoted in his *WCC report*.³²⁰ In the Memorandum it was stated:

"We do not desire to confine our conversation and collaboration to a group of experts. We feel an obligation to help to make possible a wider spirit and practice of dialogue in our communities. We recognize that different situations call for different sensitivities, but that certain irreducible principles should be respected. The implication of these principles will be particular to various contexts and will need to be patiently and practically worked out.

a) *Frank witness*: We did not ask each other to suppress or conceal his convictions. In dialogue each should bear witness of his motives to his fellows and to God. This frank witness can help to remove complacency, suspicion or unspoken fears.

b) *Mutual Respect*. We believe that mutual respect was a necessary principle for our dialogue. This does not involve a stale co-existence of 'live and let live', but a sensitive regard for the partner's scruples and convictions, sympathy for his difficulties and an admiration for his achievements. We should avoid all invidious comparison of strength in our tradition with weakness in the other, of the ideal in one with the actuality in the other.

c) *Religious freedom*: We should be scrupulous about our protection of religious liberty. This involves not only the rights of any religious minority, but also the

³¹⁹ Samartha 1973:156-163

³²⁰ Johnson 1975:101

rights of each individual. While we accept that both religious traditions have a missionary vocation, proselytism should be avoided, whether by a majority intent upon pressing a minority to conform, or whether by a minority using economic or cultural inducements to swell its ranks. It is especially unworthy to exploit the vulnerability of the uneducated, the sick and the young.”³²¹

The aim they wanted to achieve in this dialogue memorandum first is to remove suspicion and unspoken fear, and the second is to avoid comparison between two religions for the sake of mutual respect. These statements were most probably influenced by Samartha’s tentative suggestion, point three.³²²

The other interesting point from this memorandum is the description of what ‘revelation’ is, as they found in their Broumana meeting. Point (b), from ‘what have we found in our meeting together’ was formulated as follows: “Revelation: In our attempt to be obedient to Truth our respective religious communities are wrestling with their understanding of revelation. We are aware of the suspicion and doubt of many modern men and of the rapidly decreasing impact of traditional language and symbolism. Within our religious traditions there is scope for reconsidering many of our theological and legal constructions; in this we should ensure continuity with the past, notably with our authoritative sources. In our inter-religious study and colloquy we may find analogues as well as different understanding of revelation: for the Muslim the Qur’an is the Word of God; for the Christian the Christian Scriptures are a witness to the revelation in Jesus Christ. Our dialogue on such issues may help us to be more faithful to our own tradition as well as to be more appreciative of and more coherent with our neighbour. Some of us felt that in further exploration of the experience of revelation in history and of God’s guidance in our own lives we should be more open to the inexhaustible nature of the grace of God. We should also be more

³²¹ Samartha 1973:158-159 Cf. Johnson 1975:101

³²² Samartha’s tentative suggestion point 3: “Dialogue should not be limited to mere academic discussion on religious matters. I may begin among specially delegated people within a limited compass and later on spread into wider circles involving larger numbers of people. Living together in dialogue should help communities-particularly in multi-religious societies- *to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence.*” Cf. Samartha 1996:81

ready to bear a feeling of estrangement from our fellow men, even in our own tradition, as we strive, perhaps indeed on their behalf, to achieve a more critical self awareness.”³²³

The discussion concerning the nature of revelation was also one of the emphasised points at Chiang Mai consultation (1977). At this consultation it was agreed that what could appear as stumbling blocks in maintaining Christian-Muslim relationships could actually turn out to be a motivation for deep-level contact and encounter.³²⁴

From the Broumana statement, it seems as though religions or faiths were only seen as ‘traditions’ for the sake of harmony and avoiding the tensions between Muslims and Christians.

c) *Samartha and dialogue in the Chambesy Statement*

The Conference in Chambesy, Birmingham, was organized by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (CWME-WCC) in consultation with the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, and took place 26-30 June, 1976. This conference was the second one in Birmingham, after the meeting in 1968 at Selly Oak Colleges.

The purpose of the conference was to examine the nature of mission and of da’wah (Islamic propagation), and the experience of each community of the missionary/da’wah activity of the others, and also to promote reciprocal understanding between Muslims and Christians and to explore the means for a *modus vivendi*, assuring the spiritual well-being of all.³²⁵

The statements they produced here was not a general one about ‘dialogue with people of other living Faiths’, but dealt rather specifically with ‘Christian

³²³ The Broumana Memorandum is readable in Samartha 1973:160; the full text is at 156-0163.

³²⁴ Samartha 1977:153

³²⁵ Ahmad and Kerr 1976:99

mission towards Muslims' and 'Muslims da'wah towards Christians', as a real effect of implementation of 'Dialogue with other Faiths', in this case: *Muslims*.

The Chambesy statements were mainly talking about mission (Christian Mission and Islamic da'wah). At this conference it was recognised that mission and da'wah are essential religious duties in both Christianity and Islam.

Point two of this statement is talking about perfect religious freedom. "... The conference upholds the principles of religious freedom recognizing that the Muslims as well as the Christians must enjoy the full *liberty to convince and be convinced, and to practice their faith and order their religious life in accordance with their own religious laws and principles.*" ³²⁶

Point three is about the religious education at any school, and reads as follows:

"The Conference agrees... and it recommends that religious family law, whether Muslim or Christian, be not interfered with or changed in any way, directly or indirectly, by outsiders to their traditions. It also agrees that the family and community should have the right to ensure the religious education of their children by organizing their own schools, or by having teachers of their own denominations to teach religion to their children in the school, or by other suitable means. In any case they should be allowed to organize their cultural and spiritual life without outside interference, though with sensitivity to the situation in multi-religious societies."³²⁷ The implementation and the controversy of this statement in Indonesia will be discussed in chapter five.

Point four is about *freedom to have a church building*. "The conference was grieved to hear that some Christians in some Muslim countries have felt

³²⁶ Ahmad and Kerr 1982: 99-102, wrote on Point 2, Chambesy full statement, as follows: "The conference is in essential agreement that their respective communities, wherever they constitute a minority of the population, should enjoy a *de jure* existence; that each religious community should be entitled to live its religious life in accordance with its religion in perfect freedom. The conference upholds the principle of religious freedom recognizing that the Muslims as well as the Christian must enjoy the full liberty to convince and be convinced, and to practice their faith and order their religious life in accordance with their own religious laws and principles; that the individual is perfectly entitled to maintain his/her religious integrity in obedience to his/her religious principles and in faithfulness to his/her religious identity."

themselves limited in the exercise of their religious freedom and have been denied their right to church buildings. The Muslim participants regarded such violation as contrary to Islamic law as well as to the principle of religious freedom enunciated above.

Point Five is about recognition of both Christians and Muslims as equal citizens.³²⁸

Point six deals with the Christian participants extending to their Muslim brethren their full sympathy for the moral wrongs which the Muslim world has suffered at the hands of colonialist, neo-colonialists and their accomplices. This point also strongly condemned the Christian missionaries who misused diakonia for 'holy proselytism'.³²⁹

Point seven proposed a solution for practicing Christian diakonia in the Muslim world: "...The conference urges strongly that all material assistance donated by outside Churches and religious organizations henceforth be distributed wherever possible through or in co-operation with the governments and local communities of people for whom they are intended, respecting the dignity and integrity of the people concerned."³³⁰

Point eight dealt with the need for inviting Muslim and Christian representatives to one assembly to discuss further about rules for implementation of mission/da'wah which were acceptable to both sides.

Point nine urged the WCC, Vatican and the International Islamic Organizations to sponsor a conference at which the theme about mission/ da'wah can be discussed and examined at regular intervals.

³²⁷ Ahmad and Kerr 1982: 100

³²⁸ "The conference recognises fully the right of Christians as well as of Muslims to order their corporate life in accordance with the injunctions of their own religious principles and laws, and to have and maintain all requisite institutions in accordance with their religious principles and laws as equal citizens."

³²⁹ Read the Chambesy memorandum in Ahmad and Kerr 1982:99-101.

³³⁰ Ahmad and Kerr 1982 :101

Point ten formulated the appreciation from Muslim participants to WCC and IRM for having invited them to the Chambesy conference, and expressing the expectation of both sides for a better relationship between Muslims and Christian in the future.

When reading this memorandum, it is very obvious to see the extent to which Samartha's idea was appropriated and influenced the statements. The Chambesy statement was apparently used by the Muslim groups in Indonesia to push the Education and Religion affairs to modify the regulations at any schools which were known as 'joint decree between Interior Minister and Religion affairs Minister 1969 about religious teaching at the school, and 'SK70' about "religion propagation". Ironically these new regulations have created national chaos, and led to the killing of many Christians, including the closing down of many Christian schools.

My argument that the Chambesy statement was apparently used to back up the decree 70/78 (SK 70/1978) in Indonesia, is that all points of the Indonesian participant's testimonies (Muhammad Rasjidi) in the Chambesy meeting (1976) were seemingly taken by the other participants as the whole truth without a further research about the Indonesian political situation since its independence in 1945. The details of the testimony were clearly shaping most of the statements.³³¹

The real situation in Indonesia was 'fear' of each other between Christians and Muslims. Mujiburrahman described this history in his PhD dissertation (2006). He said "Muslims fear of Christianisation and objection to secularism on the one hand, and the Christians fear of Islamic state and defence of religious freedom on the other".³³²

On their resentment towards European missionaries activities during colonial time until the time after independence, the Indonesian Muslim reformists always have a desire not only to be a main ruler for the country (such as to be

³³¹ Compare Muhammad Rasjidi in Samartha 1971:69-80 and the Chambesy statement, in Samartha 1971:99-102

President or Prime Minister), but also a strong desire to run the country with Islamic ideology, because the Muslim population is the majority. They have succeeded in realising the first dream since Indonesian independence, but they still continued to struggle for the second dream to be fulfilled, until Soeharto, the second President of Indonesia, stepped down in 1998.

Most Muslims in Indonesia, if not all, see Christianity as a colonial religion, equivalent to secularism. Whatever the Indonesian Christians' activity today may entail, this is always considered by Muslims as 'Christian Aggression' which must be stopped. Mukti Ali had risen in Ajaltoun (1970) most of the issues that Rasjidi voiced in Chambesy 1976, but Mukti Ali had dealt with the case by organising and leading some inter-faith dialogue, when he was Minister of Religion, 1971-1976. Rasjidi nevertheless, voiced the same issues louder in Chambesy 1976, and brought the Chambesy statement to birth.

Alamsyah Ratuperwiranegara, who became a new Minister of Religion after Mukti Ali, did not deal with the situation in the same way as Mukti Ali did. He commented that inter-religious dialogue under Mukti Ali was too academic and philosophical, and he wanted to make it more practical. So therefore, he rather issued new decrees on the restriction of religious propagation, including stipulations that foreign aid for religious institutions must be controlled by the government.³³³ This decree was known as Decree 70/78 (SK 70/78). This issue will be discussed further in chapter five.

The conclusion we can draw about how Samartha's view on dialogue between Christian and Muslim specifically in the Chambesy statement is, that God in Islam, whom the Muslims are serving is the same as God in Christianity (or the Bible) whom the Christians are serving. Because of that, there should be no tension between Christian and Muslim, but they should rather be serving God together in their own diverse ways. Always find the common ground where the two religious groups can solve the social problems in the community as common concern, respect each other, be frank and have mutual understanding.

³³² Mujiburrahman 2006:251

³³³ Mujiburrahman 2006:273

Being Christian or Muslim according to him is only 'labels'. To serve the same God, the one and only God, is most important.

Above all, Samartha emphasized that in this dialogue, there should be religious freedom. Unfortunately, there is no further clarification what the religious freedom he speaks of entails. In fact, there is little freedom for the Christians where the predominant religion is Islam. And yet, the Chambessy statement had sharply 'circumcised' diaconia from Christianity, since Muslims were offended, but there seems to be no problem for the Muslims to practice daq'wah to convert Christians to be Muslim.

3.5 Samartha's Remark about the future of Inter-religious Dialogue

After so many statements about dialogue were produced within various WCC conferences, Samartha then asserted in his book, *Between two cultures*, that the future of inter-religious dialogue (or inter-faith dialogue) will depend on what happens within particular communities of faith and in the space between them. Samartha expected the Christians to take initiatives in building relationships with others. He added that the character and direction of these initiatives will be influenced by how Christians respond to the developments in the world of other religions as well.³³⁴ He was inspired by the significance of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) who had its origins in the 1893 Chicago gathering; he then argued that the relation between religions should be *one of friendship and co-operation, not confrontation and conflict*. Furthermore, still referring to the Chicago gathering, Samartha quoted a Buddhist monk when he was speaking about Western culture in East Asia and said to the missionaries: "If you want to establish Christianity in the East, it can only be done on the principles of Christ's love and meekness. *Let the missionaries study all religions*; let them be a type of meekness and lowliness and they will find a welcome in all lands".³³⁵

Samartha strongly believed that the future of Inter-Faith Dialogue will affect also

³³⁴ Samartha 1996:180

³³⁵ Samartha 1996:180-181

the future of peace among the nations. For him, there are three points about the necessity of religions as milestones for a better world: *first*, religions are the most enduring elements in history, despite powerful ideological forces seeking to suppress them; *second*, no single religion, in spite of enormous efforts, has succeeded in imposing its exclusive claim on others; *third*, religious pluralism is therefore a persistent fact in the long history of humanity. “Religions in one form or another seem to find ways to satisfy the hunger for transcendence in the human heart.”³³⁶ In other words, Samartha wanted to emphasise that inter-faith dialogue is very important, because it will help to bring peace in to the world. And this dialogue can be possible through Christian initiatives to make relationships with others in friendship, and by the openness to learn also about and from other religions.

3.6 The Retirement of “The Father of Dialogue”, 1980/1981

As mentioned above, Samartha had an important role in promoting dialogue within the WCC right from the birth of the concept of dialogue itself, and through the development and socialisation of inter-faith dialogue into all the Churches in the world.

He “gave birth” to 'Dialogue with men of other Living Faiths' which became known as 'inter-faith dialogue', from the moment he started his roll as secretary in the Department of Studies in Mission and Evangelism (1968-1970). He promoted the reality of Dialogue by writing and publishing on the concept of dialogue itself, first by putting forward “Six Tentative Suggestions to Dialogue”, which soon became accepted as “Interim Guidelines for Dialogue”, when he was appointed as director for a new post at WCC, the “Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies” (1971).

During his leadership on this Unit for Dialogue, he was battling to socialise the idea of dialogue, to make known to the world what dialogue with other faiths and ideologies was all about. From country to country, from continent to continent, from conference to conference, he spoke about “dialogue”. He

³³⁶ Samartha 1996:182

conceptualised dialogue, and he revised the concept, until it was published in the form of a booklet in 1979, and reprinted in 1982, 1984 and 1990. For this role, I call him the “Father of Dialogue”.

In his long journey related to the idea of Christian dialogue with other Religions, or ‘inter-faith dialogue’, there were three momentums worthy to be noticed:

- 1) The birth of the statement on “Interim Guidelines” for Dialogue itself in Addis Ababa (1971), as developed from his ‘six tentative suggestions’.
- 2) The Chiang Mai consultation, in 1977, when for the first time the WCC Central Committee received and adopted ‘the development of Interim guidelines’ to be “the Policy and Guidelines on Dialogue”, which was then known as the Chiang Mai statement.
- 3) The Kingston statement, in 1979, when the Chiang Mai Statement was revised, and was published for the first time as a booklet. This book (after various reprints) was then recommended by the WCC to the churches for study and action. Samartha states, “What had been ‘interim’ for nearly a decade of doubt, anxiety and controversy now became an ‘enduring’, if not a permanent concern for the ecumenical movement”.³³⁷

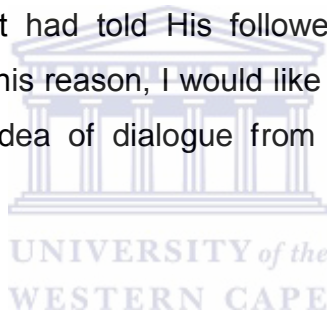
After twelve years in Geneva (1968-1980) with the WCC, Samartha decided with considerable satisfaction, that the moment had now come for him to return to his home country, India. The high light of his career, as one of the leaders in the WCC, was promoting dialogue with people of other living faiths for the sake of “harmony or peace”, a legacy now globally known as *Inter-Faith dialogue*.

He admits that he was quite satisfied with the work he had done, that the idea of dialogue had become an “enduring” or “permanent” method within the WCC, as part of the ongoing concern to seek new relations with neighbours of other faiths and ideological convictions. It nevertheless still needs to be asked, like Loffler asked in the very beginning: Did inter-faith dialogue, which Samartha promoted so faithfully for twelve years, achieve its purposes? To what extent did “Samartha’s dialogue” achieve peace and harmony between religions?

³³⁷ Samartha 1996:130

What would Samartha say (if he were still alive) about the ongoing tension between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, in the Middle East; between Hindus and Muslims in India; between Hindus and Christians in India, and between various religious groups in many parts of the World, in spite of the fact that 'inter-faith dialogue' has been employed for more than seven decades?

From the Indonesian perspective, I fully respect Samartha's compassion and his hard work in establishing and promoting "Inter-faith Dialogue". I also agree that 'dialogue between people of different faiths' is very important in establishing friendships or learning about other religions. However, I also have considerable doubt about the permanent viability of Samartha's idea of dialogue, based as it is on mere 'common humanity'. To expect 'inter-faith dialogue', in and by itself, to bring peace in the community, looks to me like an empty dream. Jesus Christ had told His followers, 'you will be persecuted because of my name'. For this reason, I would like to carefully study in the next chapter, and analyse his idea of dialogue from a contemporary missionary perspective.



3.7 Conclusion

Samartha's concept of 'dialogue with people of other living faiths' was deeply influenced by his Indian background as former student of Devanandan and M.M Thomas, two major Indian theologians, but also by his western theological professors, such as Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth.

As a son of an evangelical pastor and as product of Basel Evangelical Mission in India, he was used to a tradition of exclusiveness regarding Christian doctrine and uncompromising piety in Christian lifestyle. In his early years he was very close to his Muslim and Hindu friends, and thus, in his heart questioned whether religions should make people different. Throughout his study at the university and by his involvement within the Students' Christian Movement (SCM), he found the answer in a speech by Pandipeddi Chenchiah, 'rethinking

Christianity in India', which transformed his mind. He became a person who strove to cross the frontiers all his life, without alienating himself from his roots. He found himself in the intersection of cultures and religions. His self-understanding was that of being, unmistakably an Indian and distinctively a Christian. His horizon was broadened by his activities within SCM. Here he met other Christian denominations who had different Christian traditions, and even met with other faiths that have other symbols and different traditions in their worship of God.

His theological thinking was initially shaped by P.D. Devanandan at the United Theological College, Bangalore, and M.M. Thomas in India. He later traced his inner confidence that 'Christian life can be lived pluralistically' as he reflected on his life among many friends from different traditions and backgrounds. This theological understanding was developed since the days when he was studying at Union Theological Seminary in New York, under Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr.

Throughout his long academic career of teaching and writing, he remained convinced that an intellectual theological reflection has an indispensable role in the life of the Church. Learning from his ministry experience, he then wrote his most provoking message in the Indian context: "The critical function of Christian theologians in India and elsewhere is to speak and write courageously against uncritical conformity to tradition, emphasizing that devotion to Christ and discipleship of Jesus in the face of the striking changes taking place in contemporary history, demand changed attitudes on the part of Christians to their neighbours in the country and in the world. They need to raise new questions, suggest new answers and broaden the theological space for critical discussion in the freedom of the Spirit within the *koinonia* of the church."³³⁸ From this theological conviction, Samartha developed his concept on "Christian mission", and enriched the WCC in their invention toward the missionary approach toward people of other Faiths.

³³⁸ Raiser 2008

To Samartha, Christian understanding of mission in the contemporary world was in need of innovation. The Church's mission for him was a response to and participation in God's continuing mission in the World. Mission to the world is the Church's service and witness. Following his professors Devanandan and M.M. Thomas, he was convinced that mission was not to be equated with evangelism, which related to religious works leading to individual salvation, as normally done by the western missionaries, but rather had to be linked to social liberation, justice and other issues related to a common humanity. Common humanity or common concern for the social change in the societies is the deepest concern for Church mission, and is more important and more relevant than evangelism. To him evangelism is just the same as proselytism and smells of colonialism, which is wrong.

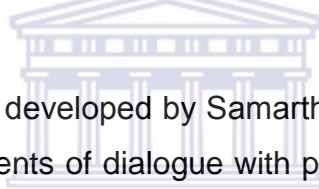
Especially since the Uppsala Assembly, in 1968, and the developments in the Roman Catholic Church in their view towards other religions³³⁹, the WCC's view of other religions changed to a more positive one. Samartha, by that time, developed his concept about the Christian relation with people of other religions to be something more than evangelism or proselytism, i.e. 'dialogue' with people of other Living Faiths, or as it has since been called: "Inter-religious dialogue' or 'inter-faith dialogue'.

Samartha's concept of inter-faith dialogue within the WCC statements and in his book was said to be 'based' on Christ's incarnation, but he apparently only used

³³⁹ "...For all peoples comprise a single community, and have a single origin, since God made the whole race of men dwell over the entire face of the earth... One also is their final goal: God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, and His saving designs extend to all men... against the day when the elect will be united in that Holy City ablaze with the splendour of God, where the nations will walk in His light..." Cf. Abbott 1966:660-663

Point 3 was written in regard to relations with Muslims: "Upon the Moslems, too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition they await the Day of Judgment when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom".

this concept as a vehicle to promote inter-faith dialogue, while regarding the nature and the factual histories of Christ's incarnation with suspicion, in line with liberal New Testament scholars.³⁴⁰ God in Jesus Christ has himself entered into relationship with people of all faiths and in all ages, offering the good news of salvation. The incarnation is God's dialogue with humanity. The freedom and love which Christ offers has drawn us to be in fellowship with strangers so that all may become fellow-citizens in the household of God. There is the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Since the truth in the biblical understanding is not propositional but relational, and is to be sought not in the isolation of lonely meditation but in the living, personal confrontation between God and human beings, and between human beings themselves, dialogue becomes one of the means of the quest for truth. Christians can not claim a monopoly on truth; we need to meet people of other faiths and ideologies as part of our trust in and obedience to the promise of Christ.



The soul of this concept, as developed by Samartha, then became “incarnated” within various WCC Statements of dialogue with people of other faiths, starting from his concept ideas in Addis Ababa, 1971, as revised in the Chiang Mai Consultation of 1977, and as published after a further revision in Kingston, in 1979.

Samartha retired from the WCC in 1980, but his influence within the world of inter-faith dialogue has continued until this day, inspiring many groups of people, to seek peace and harmony in the world of religions. The question is: does his concept of dialogue really achieve “peace and harmony”, as Samartha and the WCC were dreaming of, and which they were so optimistic about; does this concept still hold its relevance in Christian missionary vocabulary today? These questions will be studied further in chapter four.

³⁴⁰ Samartha 1991:120

CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SAMARTHA'S CONCEPT OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FROM A CONTEMPORARY MISSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Even though Samartha is no longer personally present, the spirit of 'dialogue' to which he committed his life is still working actively within the WCC and in many aspects of contact between the religious groups of people in the world. There have been many dialogue groups active in others part of the globe during Samartha's time, such as in Britain, Canada, United States, and India.³⁴¹ There is for instance the Inter-Faith Dialogue which is organized by the Turkish Muslim community in Cape Town, South Africa. In Indonesia, there are examples of interfaith dialogue organised by the government, but also by private initiative, such as 'Inter-Faith Dialogue', so called 'Dialog Antar Iman' (DIAN), with its partner from Islam, Nahdlatul Ulama Wahid Interfaiths Dialogue (NU-WDIF), and others which will be discussed in chapter five. The latest one is called Majelis Dialogue Antar Agama (MADIA). This Interfaith dialogue is organised by a joint Muslim organisation Paramadina with non-Muslim partners, such as the Indonesian Council of Churches 'PGI' and Catholic Intellectuals 'KWI'.³⁴²

Samartha's concept of Dialogue with people of other faiths will be assessed in this chapter, from a contemporary missiological perspective. The question we wish to address first of all is the following: how much of his concept can be accepted in maintaining interfaith dialogue in the context of pluralism, and which aspects of his concept should perhaps be rejected. What is the reason to accept and to disagree with of some of his concepts?

³⁴¹ Cf. Samartha 1991:24

³⁴² Mujiburrahman 2006:290

This analysis will be critically discussed with some relevant scholars, both from Christian ecumenical and evangelical groups, especially Asian scholars, including non-Christians, to help us to draw a conclusion about his view. Representing the Ecumenical Christian perspectives, theologians such as John Hick, Wesley Ariarajah, and from the Indonesian ecumenical context partners such as T.B. Simatupang and Eka Darmaputera, will be "consulted". As part of the Ecumenical voices we also wish to represent more prominent voices who were working closely with the WCC, such as David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin. Roman Catholics will be represented by Richard Friedli, Hans Küng and Paul Knitter, and the world Evangelical view will be represented by John Stott and his Asian partners such as Jnanakan and Saphir P.Athyal. Special attention is also given to Christian scholars who came from Muslim backgrounds, such as Michael Nazir- Ali. The rest of our conversations will be with selected Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu scholars.

4.1 A Theological Discussion about the dialogical relationship between Christianity and other Faiths

Our discussion will start with theologians operating from Ecumenical perspectives, and then with some Evangelical scholars who worked closely with the WCC during the dispute on inter-religious dialogue. In the next round of debate, I will present the more conservative Evangelical voices, including the particular opinion from Christian leaders who came from a Muslim background. I shall also take into account what non-Christian scholars say about 'Inter-Religious dialogue' as defined by Samartha (chapter 3), and as developed and promoted over time by the WCC.

4.1.1 From The Ecumenical voices

From the Ecumenical group, we deal with John Hick, Weslie Ariarajah, TB Simatupang and his Indonesian partner Eka Darmaputera, besides two evangelical conservatives David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin.

a) *John Hick*

John Hick is a British theologian who spent many years in the United States. He is introduced here in more detail because of his background which is in some respects quite similar to Samartha's own. He came from an exclusivist background, but then changed to become a pluralist through his study experience. His own view on Samartha's concept of Dialogue with people of other faiths is rather in the same line, especially his ideas about 'Theo-centric confession'. Hick emphasized an approach he called 'Theo-centric', as the best way to approach other faiths instead of the 'Christ-centric' Barthian approach, because the centre of the religious universe according to him is not Jesus, but God.

Before his encounter with other faiths at the University, Hick was a very strong evangelical and indeed Knitter described him as even fundamentalist. He came to feel personally that Jesus was His living Lord and Saviour, God the son Incarnated, Saviour of all humanity. Hick was born again and decided to become a minister in the Presbyterian Church. At the university, where he studied about religions, he met and came to work with persons of other faiths especially in his multi-religious home town of Birmingham. Knitter describes how Hick was shaken by 'the diversity of apparent revelations'. In this state, Hick testified that his evangelical moorings were shaken. He underwent another conversion, not in his deep commitment to Jesus but in his theology of Jesus, Christianity, and religions in general.³⁴³ In the early 1970, Hick sounded his call for what he termed a 'Copernican revolution in Christianity'.

John Hick, through his famous term 'Copernican revolution', had made a significant contribution in the inter-religious dialogue development. For him, to understand the relationship between Christianity and other religions, Christians must have a radical transformation in their conception of the universe of faiths. A transformation was needed from Christianity, centred on Jesus to one centred on God, amid the universe of faiths. He means by that, that Christians must have a revolution in their attitudes and feelings; that at the centre of their

religious beliefs stands no longer the church, nor Jesus, but God.³⁴⁴ In this matter, Hick is on the same line as Samartha, emphasising God as centre (Theo-centric) and that different religions exist alongside each other only because of different responses to God.³⁴⁵

John Hick sees Christianity as only one of many religions or traditions, similar to Samartha's view that religions complement each other. He claims that there is nothing unique or special in Christianity to make it look 'absolute' and different from other Religions. He stated, in the pluralist context, that Christianity is not the one and only way of salvation, but one among several. To him, the pluralist view in Christianity is enabling Christians to recognize other traditions and together to participate in a worldwide movement for human liberation without restricted within the borders of any one tradition. He adds that the openness to the wider religious life of humankind with its rich plurality of ways can help to free us from the grip of an absolute Christian patriarchalism.³⁴⁶ In other words, John Hick here seems to support Samartha's idea about Christian relationship with people of other Faiths: Christians must get out of their box of absoluteness and superiority feeling, to get together with other people for the sake of common humanity.

b) *Wesley Ariarajah*

The second ecumenical theologian is Wesley Ariarajah. He is the successor of Samartha after he retired in 1980 as the WCC Director of Sub-unit Dialogue with People of other Faiths. Ariarajah, from Sri Lanka, continues Samartha's vision in developing the Christian dialogue with people of other faiths. He was one of Samartha's students when he was still studying in India. In his book *Not without my neighbour* he said 'I wouldn't want to be in heaven where our neighbours were not'.³⁴⁷ He insisted this to emphasize his conviction that his Hindu neighbours in Sri Lanka also in the relationship with God, and they will be

³⁴³ Knitter 2002:113

³⁴⁴ Knitter 2002:114

³⁴⁵ Read point 6 of Samartha's tentative suggestion.

³⁴⁶ Hick 1987:33

³⁴⁷ Ariarajah1999:4

also received in Heaven. He comments that it was inconceivable and it was clearly unfair if God receives us Christians to heaven but sends our next-door Hindu to hell, says Ariarajah.

On the other hand, Ariarajah also sees the reality surrounding dialogue itself, which complicates reaching the purpose, and in which it is not easy to draw the line whether dialogue must take place when there is conflict between the people of different religions in the community. He wrote:

“Attempting to promote dialogue or inter-communal, inter-faith harmony during or soon after a conflict, though it has its own limited value, is a frustrating exercise. Communities by now are deeply polarized, confused and uncertain about who can be trusted. Solidarity across to the other community is often misunderstood as betrayal. Effort to bring about peace and reconciliation do have their legitimate place in such situations, but they call for different methods and skill.”³⁴⁸

Ariarajah here admitted that ‘dialogue’ as a method to create ‘harmony’ and ‘peace’ in the community is not guaranteed, as it was expected. To build ‘a mutual trust in the frame of Inter faith dialogue’ is not an easy thing. Dialogue for peace in the community still needs to be translated according to the context. Ariarajah in this case have a similar view with Samartha, about how to implement ‘dialogue’: it might be a different way in a different context and place.³⁴⁹

Learning from case studies that Ariarajah showed in his book, especially on dialogue related to religious tensions in the different countries, it shows to us that the dialogue does not always achieve ‘peace’. That is clear, that dialogue between different religious people is needed, to solve the tension between them in the community, but as Ariarajah admitted ‘it was frustrating’. He softens this failure by redefining what dialogue is, saying that its purpose ‘is not so much

³⁴⁸ Ariarajah 1999:13

³⁴⁹ Read Samartha’s tentative suggestion point 5a

about attempting to resolve the immediate conflicts', but about 'building a community of conversation.' He further wrote:

“Dialogue is not so much about attempting to resolve immediate conflicts, but about building a ‘community of conversation’, a ‘community of heart and mind’ across racial, ethnic and religious barriers where people learn to see differences among them not as threatening but as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’. Dialogue thus is an attempt to help people to understand and accept the other in their ‘otherness. It seeks to make people ‘at home’ with plurality, to develop an appreciation of diversity, and to make those links that may just help them to hold together when the whole community is threatened by forces of separation and anarchy.”³⁵⁰

Regarding relationship between Dialogue and Mission, Ariarajah also argued in the same line as Samartha. He insisted that ‘Christian mission’ is the European colonial’s way in spreading Christianity and political expansion. This method is no longer relevant and it must be rejected and even condemned in the collusion between religion and political power.³⁵¹ He goes further by saying that in the religiously plural context of today, we must acknowledge that is not only Christianity as religion that has the inner compulsion to engage in missionary activity. He asserts that most religions have a missionary dimension, even though there are a variety of ways in which it is expressed.

So therefore, according to Ariarajah, in the religious pluralist context, the question is not which one, ‘mission’ or ‘dialogue’, we must develop. He quoted Lesslie Newbigin on this: “both of them have their rightful place within the life of the church.” We should have an open, friendly and courteous relationship with our neighbours; there is no place in mission for condemning the beliefs of others.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Ariarajah 1999:13-14

³⁵¹ Ariarajah 1999:10; cf. Samartha 1991:2; 1996:194-201

³⁵² Ariarajah 1999:107

c) *T.B. Simatupang and Eka Darmaputera (Indonesian ecumenicals)*

The general Indonesian theological view about Samartha's concept of dialogue with other faiths is that it is not explicitly accepted or rejected. However, in practice, the demands of tolerance towards other religions, the acceptance of the influence of different traditions into Christianity, and the growing spirit of humanism in Indonesia all support the acceptance of Samartha's concept of Dialogue, even though in reality Indonesia is still one of the most restless countries in the world, as far as religious tension is concerned. Indonesia is a pluralist country in many respects. There are currently six (6) legal religions,³⁵³ with more than four hundred (400) tribes and languages/ cultures /traditions, and yet these are all united by one political ideology of the Five Principles ('Panca Sila').³⁵⁴

Simatupang, as a former chairperson of the Indonesian Council of Churches, and his fellow ecumenical theologian, Eka Darmaputera, insisted that Indonesian Christians have to dialogue within the Indonesian ideology *Panca Sila*. It means that, the mechanism of Inter-Faith Dialogue has to be shaped by *Pancasila* (in more recent times accepted as a technical concept and written as one word). The ideology of Pancasila makes dialogue a bit easier, because each religion does not have to fight with one another, but can be communicating through Pancasila. Pancasila as ideology functions to shape each religion and as catalyst in mediating dialogue inter religions.

In his book *Iman Kristen and Pancasila*, Simatupang asserted that the two-third world countries have to have their own ideologies. Because the ideology is the manifestation of the original culture, on one hand, but on the other hand, it is also as a tool for a social transformation. Relate to theology, he said, that the

³⁵³ The 6 religions in Indonesia are Islam, Christian Protestant, Roman Catholic, Hinduism, Buddhism, Kongfutzu

³⁵⁴ Gunadirdja (2005:32) describes this term as follows: "Pancasila or Five Principles is Indonesia's national ideology, came from the country's own greatly varied and multi -ethnic cultural roots: and philosophy (1) Belief in the Almighty means accept the religious diversity; (2) Humanitarianism; (3) National unity or nationalism; (4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom of consultation representation; and (5) Social justice for all Indonesian people."

ideology of Pancasila serves as a theological frame for contextualization in the Indonesian context.³⁵⁵

For Darmaputera, Pancasila, besides being an Indonesian cultural manifestation, it is also as Indonesian identity, and serves as a vehicle to the modern Indonesia. So therefore, that is very important for Indonesian Christians to dialogue within the ideology of Pancasila while remaining committed to their faith in Christ.³⁵⁶

d) *David Bosch*

David Bosch agrees with Moltmann, that Christian theology is a theology of dialogue. Christianity needs dialogue for its own sake. One way, monological travel is out, as is militancy in any form.³⁵⁷ He believes that true dialogue does not imply sacrificing one's own position. An unprejudiced approach is not merely impossible but would actually subvert dialogue. Bosch quoted WCC statement on *Guidelines on Dialogue with people of Living Faiths and Ideologies*; that dialogue means witnessing to our deepest convictions, whilst listening to those of our neighbours.³⁵⁸ He further wrote, 'without my commitment to the gospel, dialogue becomes a mere chatter; without the authentic presence of the neighbour it becomes arrogant and worthless. We are all recipients of the same mercy, sharing in the same mystery'.³⁵⁹

Bosch believes that both dialogue and mission can be conducted only in attitude of humility, because for Christians, the Christian faith is a religion of grace which is freely received and it find its centre to a significant extent, in the cross. There is therefore, something authentically Christian in an attitude of humility in the presence of other faiths. As the Bible says 'when we are weak, we are strong', so according to Bosch, the best word to characterize the Christian church in its encounter with other faiths is *vulnerability*. We can not

³⁵⁵ Siwu 1996:239

³⁵⁶ Siwu 1996:240; cf. Simatupang 1984

³⁵⁷ Bosch 1991:483; cf. Moltmann 1975:12

³⁵⁸ WCC 1979:16

³⁵⁹ Bosch 1991:484

approach people when we are confident and at ease but only when we are contradicted and at loss, says Bosch by quoting Aring *'Nobody denies that Jesus did much good, but that in no way saved him from being crucified...'*³⁶⁰

The most interesting part from David Bosch is the clear distinction he made between dialogue and mission. Quoting Scherer, he insisted that dialogue is neither a substitute nor a subterfuge for mission.³⁶¹ They are neither to be viewed as identical nor as irrevocably opposed to each other. It is fallacious to suggest that, for dialogue to be 'in', mission has to be 'out', and that commitment to dialogue is incompatible with commitment to evangelism.³⁶²

Here is the difference between David Bosch and Samartha. Bosch still believes that 'evangelism' could be on going through 'witnessing' to others, while for Samartha and his successor Ariarajah, evangelism is only the vehicle of Colonialism, and it must be stopped.

The similarities between Dialogue and mission according to Bosch is that 'in both, faith commitment goes hand-in-hand with respect for others; and in both cases we are witnessing to our deepest convictions whilst listening to those of our neighbours'. Nevertheless, on the dissimilarities between 'dialogue and mission', Bosch also made it clear that he does not agree with Paul Knitter's concept. Knitter says that the goal of mission has been achieved when announcing the gospel has made the Christian a better Christian and the Buddhist a better Buddhist. Bosch said this is definitely not a goal of mission, but it may be one of the goals of dialogue. The Church mission's goal is to proclaim, without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.³⁶³

In the process of formulating his thirteen missionary paradigms, especially regarding 'mission as witness to people of other living faiths', Bosch categorized Samartha as a relativist, because Samartha is questioning the finality of Jesus

³⁶⁰ Bosch 1991:485; cf. Aring 1971:142

³⁶¹ Scherer 1987:162

³⁶² Bosch 1991:487

³⁶³ Bosch 1991:487; cf. John 14: 6

Christ and the normativity of Christian faith.³⁶⁴ Bosch described the relationship between ecumenism and the theology of religions historically. Historically, he said, the Christian approach to witness to other religions is divided in three ways: *exclusivism*, *fulfilment*, and *relativism*. The Western approach was mostly *exclusivist (triumphalist)*, where Christianity is seen as the only, the absolute truth, the only one proclaiming and guaranteeing salvation, while the others are cults and must be crushed. This belief created tensions and war between Christians and Islam in the past centuries, through the so-called 'crusades'. The effects of this old view are still evident in the unhealed wounds between Christians and Muslims.³⁶⁵

The other approach is *fulfilment*, where Christians believe that Christianity serves as the fulfilment of other religions. The Christians in witness to people of other religions only need to do some 'comparative religion' to help them in adaptation, accommodation and may be implementing indigenization.³⁶⁶

The last approach is called '*relativism*', where religions are seen as more or less the same. They only have different names, but all religions are referring to the same reality (if there is such reality). In this relativism, there is no such thing as 'absolute' and 'normative'. Bosch mentioned some theologians in this category, such as John Hick, Knitter, Panikkar and *Stanley Samartha (the latter being the focus of this study)*. These theologians are clearly and seriously questioning the finality and the definitive normativity of Christ and of Christianity.³⁶⁷ "Relativism understands pluralism as a corollary of religious liberty: everyone should have the right to choose whatever they want without arguing or trying to persuade others. Relativism does not deny the differences between religions, but it relativizes their ultimate significance"³⁶⁸ Samartha himself did not admit that he is actually 'a relativist' but saw himself as a 'pluralist'. According to him, a

³⁶⁴ Bosch 1991: 482

³⁶⁵ Bosch 1991:478

³⁶⁶ Bosch 1991:479; cf. Bosch 1991:481

³⁶⁷ Bosch 1991:482

³⁶⁸ Klootwijk 1992:83

relativist attitude is not convincing. He sees it as 'a very shallow approach to questions of fundamental importance in human life'.³⁶⁹

In relation to 'mission and dialogue', David Bosch did not explicitly reject the above 'three post-modern responses' towards other faiths. But he insisted that 'we' (Christians) are in need of a theology of religions characterized by creative tension, which reaches beyond the sterile alternative between a comfortable claim to absoluteness and arbitrary pluralism.³⁷⁰ He adds "the various models seem to leave no room for embracing the abiding paradox of asserting both ultimate commitment to one's own religion and genuine openness to another's, of constantly vacillating between certainty and doubt. Each time in all these approaches –the tension snaps".³⁷¹ What Bosch wanted to address here is that in Christian dialogue with people of other faiths, 'paradox' and 'tension' cannot be avoided, but this tension must be turned into 'creative tension'.

As 'creative tension', Bosch described the relationship between mission and dialogue in several perspectives. *The first* is called '*the meeting of hearts rather than of minds*'. It means that both mission and dialogue manifest themselves in a meeting of hearts rather than of minds. To have dialogue is already a decision of the heart rather than the intellect. Every party must accept the coexistence of different faiths and do so not grudgingly but willingly, because, above all, we are dealing with a mystery.³⁷² He agrees that Christian theology needs dialogue for its own sake. Christian theology is a theology of dialogue. One way or monological travel towards other religions is no longer relevant.

The second point that he raises about dialogue is that *true dialogue presupposes commitment*. It means that true dialogue does not imply sacrificing one's own position. Bosch agrees on the guideline to dialogue:³⁷³ "dialogue means witnessing to our deepest convictions, whilst listening to those of our neighbours". Without my commitment to the gospel, he said, dialogue becomes

³⁶⁹ Samartha 1981:24; cf. Klootwijk 1992:83

³⁷⁰ Bosch 1991: 483

³⁷¹ Bosch 1991:483

³⁷² Bosch 1991:483

³⁷³ WCC 1979:16; cf. Bosch 1991:484

a mere chatter; without the authentic presence of the neighbour it becomes arrogant and worthless. *Third*, dialogue is only possible if we proceed from the belief that we expect to meet God who has preceded us and has been preparing people within the context of their own cultures and convictions.³⁷⁴ *Forth*, both dialogue and mission can be conducted only in an attitude of humility. *Fifth*, both dialogue and mission should recognize that religions are worlds in themselves, with their own axes and structures; they face different directions and ask fundamentally different questions. This means, among other things, that the Christian gospel relates differently to Islam, than it does to Hinduism, Buddhism and others.³⁷⁵

e) *Lesslie Newbigin*

Another prominent theologian who was working closely with the WCC is Lesslie Newbigin. He made a clear distinction between 'pluralist' and 'pluralism'. Pluralist means that each person is free to believe what he or she prefers. It is a matter of personal choice, of having 'a faith of your own.' We do not ask whether the belief is true, but whether the believers are sincere in holding the belief. On the other hand, it does not occur to us to ask whether a person is sincere in his or her beliefs about physics; we ask whether the belief is correct. On the other hand, religious pluralism is the belief that the differences between the religions are not a matter of truth and falsehood, but of different perceptions of the one truth; that to speak of religious beliefs as true or false is inadmissible. Religious belief is a private matter.³⁷⁶ He notes that each of us is entitled to have - as we say - a faith of our own.³⁷⁷ Samartha in this context is a pluralist in his approach to religious pluralism in constructing his concept of 'inter-religious dialogue'.

Newbigin categorized Samartha under 'Modern Historical Consciousness', which emphasizes that all religions must contribute together to answer the global problems of the world. He seems to agree with Samartha that 'to claim

³⁷⁴ Bosch 1991:484

³⁷⁵ Bosch 1991:465

³⁷⁶ Newbigin 1989:15

³⁷⁷ Newbigin 1989:14

that one religious tradition has the only answer to such a global problems seems preposterous'.³⁷⁸ For Samartha and other pluralists, said Newbigin, the affirmation of the continuing validity of the other great religions is a necessary part of the struggle of their people to emerge from the spiritual and cultural humiliation of colonialism.³⁷⁹ So he commented on Samartha's calling to Christians to contribute to the pool of human values such as justice and compassion, truth and righteousness together with other religions and cultures: "it is indeed the duty of Christians in multi-faith societies to cooperate with people of other faiths in seeking a just ordering of society, but this is in no sense a substitute for the missionary preaching of the Church".³⁸⁰

When I say 'I believe', Newbigin adds, I am not merely describing an inward feeling or experience: I am affirming what I believe to be true, and therefore what is true for everyone. The test of my commitment to this belief will be that I am ready to publish it, to share it with others, and to invite their judgment and - if necessary - correction. If I refrain from this exercise, if I try to keep my belief as a private matter, it is not belief in the truth.³⁸¹

Another aspect on which Newbigin does not agree with Samartha is when Samartha strongly attacks the traditional understanding of the Christian mission on the grounds that 'conversion, instead of being a vertical movement towards God, a genuine renewal of life, has become a horizontal movement of groups of people from one community to another'. Newbigin comments that this is again the same fundamentally false view of what it is to be a human person. A true relation to God cannot be independent of our relation with other people, and allegiance to Christ must necessarily be expressed in relationship with those who share that allegiance. According to him, Samartha here sees the human person as an isolated monad, "vertically" related to God through an inward

³⁷⁸ Newbigin 1989:156

³⁷⁹ Newbigin (1989:156) was referring to Samartha's article in the *International Review of Mission*, July 1988:315-321

³⁸⁰ Newbigin 1989:156

³⁸¹ Newbigin 1989:22

spiritual experience which is unrelated to the 'horizontal' relations of human beings with each other.³⁸²

This research shows that even in the ecumenical body itself, was still having different views about what and how 'dialogue with people of other faiths is'. But again, even though both Bosch and Newbigin are not Asian, they nevertheless, have a deep sense of Asian and understanding on Asian situation.

4.1.2 From The Evangelical voices

The evangelical voices will be presented by both Western and Asian figures. The Asian evangelical voices however, will be dealt with more prominently in this chapter as part of assessing Samartha's concept of inter-faith dialogue.

a) *A Western representative - John Stott*

One of the most well known evangelical figures worldwide is John Stott. For many years he served as rector of All Souls Church in London. For him, dialogue such as develop under Samartha's guidance in the WCC, is not totally wrong as long as we as Christians do not cultivate a total 'openness'. Stott here seems to oppose Samartha's total openness to wards other faiths.

He also does not agree that monologue is necessarily proud or arrogant, as Samartha accused. He insisted, 'we should be willing to enter into dialogue. In doing so we shall learn from the other person both about his beliefs and also (by listening to his critical reaction to Christianity) about certain aspect of our own. But we should not cultivate a total 'openness' in which we suspend even our convictions concerning the truth of the gospel and our personal commitment to Jesus Christ. To attempt to do this would be destroy our own integrity as Christians'.³⁸³

³⁸² Newbigin 1989:165

³⁸³ Stott 1975:60

He admitted there is dialogue in the Bible: in Jesus' ministries to the various people, but also in Paul's ministry. All this 'dialogue' nevertheless, always functions as part of proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus. He criticized the modern dialogue of Christians with non-Christians which seems to savour rather of unbelief, than of faith, of compromise than proclamation.³⁸⁴ One of the fundamental beliefs of ecumenical scholars who support the modern dialogue today is that Christ is already present everywhere, also in other religions. Because of that, there is no need to proclaim the Gospel any more as many missionaries are still doing.³⁸⁵

Brewster, another evangelical scholar, in his compendium about the Gospel and Islam, commented that this view poses 'a real danger'. He insisted, of course, that in the highly visible, formal, somewhat imposing dialogues the WCC have held, that the claims of Christians may never surface, and that dialogue will become the end rather than a means of sharing Christianity.³⁸⁶ Stott, therefore, strongly emphasized that a true dialogue, according to him is a mark of 'authenticity; humility; integrity; and sensitivity'.³⁸⁷

b) *Asian Representatives*

Two other famous Indian evangelical theologians, Sunanda Sumithra and Ken Jnanakan, criticized Samatha's pluralistic concept of dialogue as not biblical and as compromised, 'surrendering some of the essentials of biblical Christian faith, as well as denying the integrity of the Bible and the records of God's dealing with humankind'.³⁸⁸ But another Evangelical from India, Saphir P Athyal, principal of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, is not as radical as the first two - his fellows from India. According to him, inter-

³⁸⁴ Stott 1975:63

³⁸⁵ Samatha 1975:66

³⁸⁶ Brewster 1979:524

³⁸⁷ Stott (1975:71-81) wrote as conclusion: "Dialogue is a token of genuine Christian love, because it indicates our steadfast resolve to rid our minds of the prejudices and caricatures which we may entertain about other people; to struggle to listen through their ears and look through their eyes so as to grasp what prevents them from hearing the gospel and seeing Christ; to sympathize with them in all their doubts, fears and 'hang-ups'".

³⁸⁸ Jnanakan 1990:170

religious dialogue in Asia is one of the critically important issues, because of the pluralism of religion.³⁸⁹ He is so convinced that dialogue can serve as a form of pre-evangelism or “bridge building”.³⁹⁰

In some way, Athyal indicated that his opinion about inter-faith dialogue has a similarity with Samatha’s ecumenical emphasis, in terms of the necessity to understand other religion for effective evangelism. He insisted that “Interacting with people of other faiths and seeking to understand them are not optional exercises for us”. He explains that in the communities where people of different religions live together as neighbours, it is inevitable that they will be conscious of their interdependence and seek to promote peace and mutual understanding. He goes further, that “it is also necessary for us to be well aware of the beliefs and convictions that shape people if we wish to communicate the gospel effectively to them. These are the considerations that lead to inter-religious dialogue”.³⁹¹ The difference with Samatha is that he does not agree at all to use inter-faith dialogue as tool for pre-evangelism, but rather to deepen the commitment of each participant to their own faith.

For Athyal, like many Evangelicals, dialogue is seen as necessary and vital to Christian witness: because first, it *expresses true respect for people*. They are not treated simply as objects or targets of evangelism. He suggests that we learn to listen with genuine interests and teachable-ness. As a result, we increase our capacity to be sensitive and respectful of other people’s backgrounds, feelings, and convictions. The second reason is that a genuine participation in dialogue *shows humility*. It indicates an acknowledgment that we are not superior and that we come with a willingness to learn from others, whatever their background. Third, dialogue is a mark of *authenticity*. We cannot throw the gospel at people from a safe distance. Fourth, dialogue clarifies misunderstanding. Fifth, Dialogue is for *our own enrichment*.³⁹² The last reason why dialogue is necessary in Asia is to prepare us *for effective communication of the gospel*. How can we communicate if we do not know our partners well

³⁸⁹Athyal 1993:63

³⁹⁰Athyal 1993:64

³⁹¹Athyal1993:63

³⁹²Athyal 1993:64

enough, if we do not understand the screen through which they hear and understand?³⁹³

To support his thesis, as an Asian Evangelical, Athyal proposed the use of dialogue methods, to emphasize the personal dimension of one's experience of God and to avoid any criticism of the partner's experience, by following the style of: "this is my quest for God and my experience of God." Here Athyal avoided a comparison of religions or a philosophical theological approach. He asserted that for the dialogue to have integrity we must come to the partner as his or her equals; we must listen just as much as we speak; and an outright criticism and rejection of the position of the other is not proper.³⁹⁴

4.1.3 A Christian with Muslim background

Michael Nazir Ali is Bishop of Rochester, Church of England (UK). He was a Former General Secretary of the Church Missionary society. He is one of the pioneers in Muslim/Christian Encounter (Regnum Books 1987). Ali based his opinion of the necessity of dialogue on Prov.27:27- 'as iron sharpened iron so the countenance of man his fellow'. To him, the church's call to dialogue is not only limited to people of other faiths, but includes dialogue with the world in its several manifestations, including dialogue with scientific communities and arts. He also insisted that we base the possibility of dialogue with people of all kinds on the principles that The Holy Spirit is working in the world among men and women everywhere, in all cultures. If not, the recognition of the truth of the gospel would not at all be possible.³⁹⁵

He comments that dialogue is not only preparatory to witness, but it is also the means to witness. Ali means by that that through dialogue both parties have the opportunities to witness to their faith in trust that the partners recognize each other's integrity. For Christians, he insisted, dialogue will always be about listening and learning; our partner's faith may shed unexpected light on our

³⁹³Athyal 1993:65

³⁹⁴Athyal 1993:64

³⁹⁵Ali 1995:75

own. We must, however, show that we also are committed to let the light of Christ shine through our conversation and reflection. Without that, dialogue remains unfulfilled for the Christian.³⁹⁶

Ali criticized the WCC for contradictions in their statements about 'dialogue and mission'. In some documents, he commented, it was clearly said that dialogue is a medium for authentic witness. But other documents deny this and make every effort to claim that the occasion of dialogue must not be an occasion for Christian witness.³⁹⁷ He agrees that dialogue is not about proselytization, but he believes that the fullness of dialogue is when Christians and their partners have the opportunity to witness to their faiths in trust that the partners recognize each other's integrity.

In line with Eric Sharpe from Australia, Ali gave some examples of how he distinguishes four different ways of dialogue in practice today.³⁹⁸ First, he mentions *discursive dialogue*: when partners come together and exchange information about each other's beliefs. In this way, the Christians must be very attentive to their partners; talk less and listen more. The second form is called *common humanity dialogue*: when both parties dialogue for a common recognition of our humanity. Ali admitted that this is not an easy dialogue between Christians and Muslims when it comes to the issues such as human rights and the rights of women, since it will involve the Qur'anic penal law. This will not be easily resolved, but dialogue can make it more open. The third: *Dialogue to build community*. The members are working together for the building up of one community and are not engaged in activities that divide communities into Muslim and Christian sectors, or others, but the focus is on 'our community'. The fourth, *spiritual dialogue*: Where the members are sharing exchanges of their spiritual experience to enrich each other's knowledge and experience. An example of this is the closeness of Christianity and the Muslim Sufi tradition, which came about through spiritual dialogue throughout history. The last one is '*Intra-Christian ecumenical dialogue*': Where a group of scholars

³⁹⁶ Ali 1995:83

³⁹⁷ Ali (1995: 83) here refers to WCC document about Dialogue at Chiang Mai 1979 (WCC 1979:16).

³⁹⁸ Sharpe 1995:81; cf. Ali 1995:83

from each side come together for a considerable period of time, through correspondence and meetings, to discuss certain themes, for the members to get a common understanding, e.g. on a topic such as 'the place of the Scripture in religion'³⁹⁹

In the spirit of dialogue, Ali insisted that Christians will want to affirm all that is good and true in the lives of non-believers as well as in the lives of those of other faiths, but they will find both the source and the fulfilment of all goodness and truth in Christ, 'the Eternal Word of God'.⁴⁰⁰ In his book, '*Mission and Dialogue*', Ali encouraged the Christian to do both evangelization and dialogue to everyone, including to people of other Faiths. But this should be done in the humility which we have seen in Jesus Christ, who 'though in the form of God, He emptied himself and took the form of a slave'.⁴⁰¹

4.1.4 Roman Catholic Voices

The most phenomenal in motivating 'Christian dialogue with people of other faiths' is the declaration by Roman Catholic Church leaders on the relationship to Non-Christian Religions, called '*the Second Vatican Declaration*'. In that declaration was emphasized, that in other religions, especially Islam; people of faith can earn salvation, 'because their faith is also associated with Abraham's faith and they worship God earnestly'.⁴⁰² Since then, the Roman Catholic Church treats the people of other Faiths as no longer the target of Catholic mission (proselytism), but as human neighbours. To them, God in Jesus Christ calls the church to love their neighbours through daily dialogue.

a) *Richard Friedli*

Friedli was one of the participants in theological consultation in Chiang Mai (1997). He was a professor of Missiology and Science of Religions at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. In his discussion of the topic, 'dialogue

³⁹⁹ Ali 1995:83

⁴⁰⁰ Ali 1995:110

⁴⁰¹ Ali 1995:110

⁴⁰² Abbott 1966:663

between the religions - its cultural anthropological problems', he quoted from a Vatican Declaration as follows: "We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the Father of all if we refuse to act in a brotherly way toward certain men, created though they are to God's image. A man's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that Scripture says: "he who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8). "The ground is therefore removed from every theory or practice which leads to a distinction between men or peoples in the matter of human dignity and the rights which flow from it".⁴⁰³

He goes further to say that the New Testament model for this dialogue in Roman Catholic mode is 'The good Samaritan' in Jesus' parable and 'the criteria of the last judgment'. In these passages people are questioned, in the first place not about their relationship to God the Father but about their relationship to man the brother, who must be accepted as the neighbour at any given moment, irrespective of his race, nationality, religion or culture.⁴⁰⁴ In the light of the Second Vatican Declaration, the Roman Catholic Church sees that in Christ's economy there is a growing fulfilment of this reality of being a neighbour to others in salvation history. Friedli further wrote; 'as long as the history of the cultural diversity of mankind and human nature is not yet complete, our knowledge of Christ will also remain incomplete'. So therefore, he suggested that in dialogue with people of other religions we cannot as Christians assert that we know Christ completely and tell them that they too should believe in Him.⁴⁰⁵ As implementation of the Vatican Declaration, the Roman Catholic Church employs two models of dialogue: the approach of *comparative religion* and *the social-ethical approach*.

b) Hans Küng

Hans Küng's approach on 'Inter-Religious dialogue' was started by redefining what Religion is. In his book '*Christianity and the World Religions*', he gave a

⁴⁰³ Friedli (1977:29) , quoted originally from the Documents of Vatican II by Abbott and Gallacher

⁴⁰⁴ Friedli 1977:29

⁴⁰⁵ Friedli 1977:30

definition of religions according to the purpose of dialogue as follows:

“Religion is a social and individual relationship, vitally realized in a tradition and community (through doctrine, ethos, and generally ritual as well), with something that transcends or encompasses man and his world, with something always to be understood as the utterly final, true reality (the absolute, God, nirvana)”.⁴⁰⁶ Küng here emphasized religion as a social and individual relationship with something transcendent (depending on what each religion calls its name).

In the discussion with Hans Küng, to make inter-religious dialogue possible, he insisted that every member (Christian or non-Christian) has to avoid a narrow-minded, conceited absolutism, which sees its own truth as absolute. He notes that the principle is that nothing of value in the other religions is to be denied, but neither is anything of no value to be uncritically accepted. He asserted that we need a dialogue with give and take, into which the deepest intentions of the religions must be introduced. Thus, he suggests, it must be a critical dialogue, in which all religions are challenged not simply to justify everything, but to deliver their best and most profound message. We need a dialogue in mutual responsibility and in the awareness that none of us possesses the truth ‘ready made’, but are all on the way to the ‘ever greater’ truth.⁴⁰⁷

c) Paul Knitter

Knitter criticised the inter-religious dialogue such as provided by Samartha’s model, as according to him, it easily boils down to a ‘relativistic pap’ in which ‘many’ means ‘any’, where no one can make any evaluative judgment.⁴⁰⁸ He did not mention Samartha’s name in his article ‘*Toward a Liberation Theology of religions*’, yet, he clearly mentioned ‘as *theologians*’ and ‘*promoters*’ of a *pluralistic dialogue*’. We know from the history of inter-religious dialogue itself,

⁴⁰⁶ Küng1993:xvii

⁴⁰⁷ Küng 1993:xix

⁴⁰⁸ Knitter 1987:181

that Samartha himself was the one who went over the world, promoting 'inter-religious dialogue' through the WCC.

Knitter called his model a '*mutuality model*' instead of 'pluralist model'. According to him, for this mutuality model, relationship is more important than plurality. In maintaining a relationship of mutuality, there is a relationship, a conversation, which really goes both ways, in which both sides are really talking and listening, open themselves to learning and changing.⁴⁰⁹ He suggests three ways to maintain the richness of pluralism without allowing it to disintegrate into the pap of relativism: one of them is *Adopting a hermeneutics of suspicion*.

Knitter here suggests that the Christian theologians (in the pluralist context) be hermeneutically suspicious in approaching their Christian positions concerning outsiders. How much has traditional theology of religions, especially its Christological basis, served to cloak or condone an unconscious, ideological desire to maintain superiority, or to dominate and control, or to devalue other traditions culturally or religiously. Certain doctrines in the past had been used to justify the subordination and exploitation of other cultures and religions.⁴¹⁰ Knitter explains further that for the mutuality model, anything that threatens the mutuality of dialogue is highly suspect, to say the least.⁴¹¹

Towards Jesus' uniqueness, he comments that the pluralist is trying to balance the teeter-totter. He said: to them, it appears that traditional understanding of Christ and the church throw up doctrinal obstacles to the ethical obligation to engage in authentic dialogue with others. Something is wrong in such an attitude. Something has to be re-examined and re-visioned. Because of that, the pluralists are rereading the Bible in light of their new experience of other

⁴⁰⁹ Knitter 2002:110

⁴¹⁰ Knitter (1987:182) gave as examples the doctrine in Roman Catholic such as "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" (outside the church, no salvation); or the claim that Christ has to be the final norm for all other religions'. He said that these doctrines happened certainly ; it cannot be denied that in the past such doctrines and such Christology have been used to justify the subordination and exploitation of other cultures and religions.

⁴¹¹ Knitter 2002:110

religions and are searching for new understandings of Jesus that would enable them to be as open to other religions as they are deeply committed to him.⁴¹²

The second is *the hermeneutical privilege of the poor*. Knitter and John Hick here suggest that the 'preferential option for the poor' serves as another basis for inter-religious dialogue. He insisted that if the liberationists' hermeneutics of suspicion can help theologians of the religions clear away ideological obstacles to more effective dialogue, another foundation stone of liberation theology is the hermeneutical privilege of the poor.⁴¹³ He sees 'poverty' as common ground where all religions can share. He was in the same line with other liberation theologians who want to see that religions enable the people to be liberated out of poverty.

The third is *the soterio-centric approach*. In this approach he emphasised as criteria the transition from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness.⁴¹⁴ It means in dialogue with neighbours, the standard is not self-centred, not to draw the neighbours to us, but we give ourselves to reality - the reality of poverty. On the basis of this, the Christian must empty him- or herself to save his or her dialogue partner. This is the soterio-centric approach.

In the context of liberation theology, Knitter sees 'the poor' and the 'outcast' (non-person) as victims of the world. So therefore, he supports the inter-religious dialogue to be based on 'the poor and non person' as a common approach or common context. For Liberation theologians, he asserted that this common context would be the preferential option for the poor and the non person - that is, the option to work with and for the victims of this world. Quoting Harvey Cox, he adds: 'For liberation theology, the basis for inter-religious dialogue is the struggle of the poor'.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² Knitter 2002:111

⁴¹³ Knitter 1987:183

⁴¹⁴ Knitter 1987:189

⁴¹⁵ Knitter 1987: 185

4.1.5 From Non-Christian Scholars

The scholars' opinion about Christian Dialogue with people of other Faiths that will be presented here are mainly from Asian Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

a) *Indonesian Muslim View - Mukti Ali*

Mukti Ali was Indonesian Religious Affairs Minister in the early seventies, when Samartha was busy promoting the idea of inter-faith dialogue through WCC Sub unit Dialogue. He was one of the participants at the Ajaltoun consultation in Lebanon in 1970, and presented his paper under the title *Dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia and its Problems*. According to him, he already started inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia even before Samartha (WCC) was promoting that concept to Indonesia. He initiated it, because of the ongoing tension between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia since 1960.⁴¹⁶

The dialogue was held at the formal and government level, where Indonesian President (Soeharto 1965-1998) suggested forbidding a religious propagation by any religion to other religious believers. 'The Muslims should not become the targets of Christian missionaries, as much as the Christians could not be considered as the objective of Islamic preaching'. Unfortunately, this first attempt at dialogue was seen by Ali as a failure.⁴¹⁷

Ali explained that the tension between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia was not only because of the religious propagation by Christians to Muslims, but also other social issues that stirred the sentiment of the Muslims. Examples of these were e.g. that the Christians tend to build their churches in areas where predominantly Muslims are living; the Christian preachers are consciously distorting the verses of the Qur'an and against Prophet Muhammad for their propaganda purposes. After a few times in which the dialogue was held on

⁴¹⁶ Ali 1971:79

⁴¹⁷ Ali (1975:78-82) explained that the Muslim delegation accepted this proposal, but unfortunately the Catholics and the Protestants could not accept this proposal because they consider this as contrary to the mission assigned to them by the Bible. This proposal later become more known as Decree nr.70/1978, a the repetition of the same decree in 1969 by the joint Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs; where religious preaching to

Christian property, Ali then moved it in to his own house. He observed such a dialogue between men of living faiths will be more rewarding if it was held in a private capacity instead of in a formal and governmental level by the politicians.⁴¹⁸

At the end of his address in Ajaltoun, Ali remarked: As far as the Muslims are concerned, their hands are always stretching to their Christian brethren. What they want is freedom and peace. The Muslims believe that this is the time of cooperation and national development. This is not the middle Ages where the spirit of Crusade was dominant. Let us try honestly to work together fruitfully and creatively for the benefit of mankind, whether as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists, or otherwise.⁴¹⁹

Ali's view on Inter-Religious Dialogue was seemingly parallel with Samartha's. It was not so clear who influenced who. The fact was the Indonesia political atmosphere was changed since Samartha met Mukti Ali in 1970. Samartha's concept of inter-religious dialogue, which focused on common human concern, later developed into the national constitution by the government where Muslims were given more advantages, while Christians were slowly but surely pushed away to the corner.⁴²⁰

In the Inter-Religious Dialogue held in Colombo, Sri Lanka 1975, Ali again spoke about '*cooperation and resource mobilization*'. He encouraged the participants to be more active in continuing dialogue, especially in the global world with the larger information and the advances of science and technology which lead to ever more rapid changes in the community. According to him, it is imperative for the world religions to be clear about the human and ethical problems as implicit impact and the social consequences of the global change in the community. In this search, Ali continued looking for an ethical system that will enable people to survive as civilized human beings in the coming decades;

those who already profess a religion was banned, include in Christian Schools. Mukti Ali repeated this issue in his speech in Colombo 1975.

⁴¹⁸ Ali 1971:80

⁴¹⁹ Ali 1971:80

⁴²⁰ Arifianto 2009:73-89

for this, it was of the greatest importance that the various world religions continue their dialogue with each other.⁴²¹

He also addressed as a possible area of cooperation between the various religions the area of social work and social development, in programs and institutions on the international as well as domestic level; they should work together on concrete social problems which would be of invaluable importance to the emergence of a world community.⁴²²

Ali focused here on common social human problems in the community as the area where inter-religious dialogue can work together. Unfortunately, in the closing of his speech, he implicitly criticised the problems in Indonesia because of the missionary workers 'giving social help in the community for 'proselytism purpose', which according to him Christians are practicing in the community. He affirmed the Broumana statement (1972) about 'religious freedom' which was stated that there should be 'no proselytism' in any way.

He suggested further in order to maintaining the necessary mutual respect, that the pupils who are studying at private schools run by a particular religious community should be given religious instruction on their own to preserve their personal integrity and their own cultural background. Later, his successor Alamsyah, issued the decree as follow up to what Ali had started in 1970.⁴²³

Ali, however, only seemed to see the evangelism by Christians as against 'religious freedom', while ignoring the islamization which Muslims are doing through education, political enforcement and the economic expansion, everywhere in the world, including in Indonesia. They understand evangelism as Christians are repeating the colonial triumphalism towards Islam, and forcing their religious doctrines to others for the sake of proselytism. To them,

⁴²¹ Ali 1975:80

⁴²² Ali 1975: 81

⁴²³ This is the background of Decree nr.70/1978 which now so strongly influences particular Muslim groups in Indonesia towards a deep resentment against Christian Schools, and towards employing the Muslim's law (Sharia) in many areas in Indonesia, as implementation of that decree. Somehow, this is one of the fruits of the inter-religious dialogue that Samartha might not have been aware of (Cf. Ali 1975:82).

this is totally unacceptable in the pluralist country such as Indonesia, which must be stopped if the Christians expect Muslims to come to inter-faith dialogue. On the other hand, they could be open for inter-faith dialogue only in the area of common humanity, such as ethical issues, related to empirical change in the wake of the impact of modern technology.

b) *Buddhist Voices*

To Buddhists, inter-religious dialogue deserves the approval and encouragement of all concerned with the future of humanity. In other words, Buddhist groups support inter-religious dialogue because the goal of dialogue is not against the doctrine of Buddhism for humanity.

Hewage, as representative of Buddhism in the Colombo consultation said: 'We are like pilgrims on a pilgrimage to the peak of the mountain to see a light from the peak. This peak cannot be reached unless we all share our resources, help one another by illuminating one another's path by the little light we have, exchange the information we all have acquire on our way, avoid conflicts and unnecessary controversies about the details of the path or about the light we hope to see when we reach the top of the peak, march forward in cooperation and with compassion by learning from the mistakes of all of us'.⁴²⁴ It does not mean that there are no problems between Buddhism and other religions, particularly Christianity.

In the context of Sri Lanka, Lynn A. de Silva quoted one of the Buddhist writers: 'The Buddhist-Christian problem in Ceylon today is not one that stems from doctrinal or metaphysical differences. It has also nothing to do with the question of religious freedom. It is really a problem that stems from social and economic issues. ..that they are exploiting the poverty and the caste differences among the Buddhists to proselytize them'.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁴ Hewage 1975:89

⁴²⁵ De Silva 1971:47

These issues will not be discussed here in much detail. The point is clear, that there is no non-Christian religion, including Buddhism, which agrees to do 'mission' in the name of helping the poor or giving to the needy for the sake of proselytism. Like other religions, Buddhism also complains that Christians used colonial powers to entrench themselves in places of power and privilege; and converting Buddhist members through material privileges.⁴²⁶ From that seminar was stressed, through such obvious problems, that we are ignorant of one another's beliefs and how much we had misunderstood and even misrepresented them. So therefore, dialogue on various issues was considered to be of great importance.⁴²⁷

c) *Hindu Voices*

The word 'dialogue' itself is not new for most Hindus. In Hinduism, they are used to the concept of 'inner dialogue': the spiritual experience of listening to the Spirit or the Mystery through their soul.⁴²⁸ According to them, external dialogues such "Inter-faith Dialogue" can only be possible by experiencing first the inner dialogue. Without it, the external dialogue would slip very easily either into shallow discussion and superficial agreement (syncretism) or into monologues leading to serious antagonism.⁴²⁹

Most Hindus are still suspicious of 'Inter-faith dialogue' as another way of Christians to convert them to be Christian. Sivendra Prakash, one of the Hindu participants who personally had discussions with Murray Rogers, in his letter said 'inter-faith dialogue' functions either on the merely social plan or tends to lead to 'preaching in order to convert us to your dharma'.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ De Silva 1971:54

⁴²⁷ De.Silva 1971: 49

⁴²⁸ Klostermaier (1971:12) explains: "In order to be able to listen to the voice of the Spirit they have to free themselves, as far as possible, from preconceived ideas and let the text - 'shruti', the revealed voice of Brahman - speak to them in its immediacy".

⁴²⁹Rogers (1971:30). He rewrote a postscript to his article "Hindu-Christian dialogue postponed" after his conversation and receiving the letter from his Hindu partner, Sivendra Prakash. The letter came to him after the meeting they planned in a university city of North India, which is also a centre of Hindu pilgrimage, failed twice. The reason to cancel the meeting was because no one from Hindu group was present except one or two of twelve Hindus who were expected.

⁴³⁰ Rogers 1971:22

Regarding the motto from the ecumenical side about dialogue, that we have to learn from each other, including from Hinduism, Prakash also critically challenged Christians and added that if the Christians really wanted to learn from Hindus, they should just go with humility and sincerity to the feet of some real guru, a knower of the Scriptures and at the same time a man of personal experience: 'he will lead you step by step to that very experience which he himself has obtained by the grace of his own guru'.⁴³¹

What Prakash wanted to say is that the true dialogue that a Hindu expects is not in academic discussion or theological debate, but something that helps participants to realize more deeply the mystery of the spirit in their life. He insisted: 'I long for the only dialogue which will help me to realize more deeply the Mystery of the spirit in me'.⁴³² He is fully convinced that dialogue is an essential part of the human life, and therefore of religious life itself. But what he felt was rather being annoyed, he said about his opinion towards Christian dialogue with other faiths (particularly with Hinduism). His criticism towards 'formal dialogue', which Samartha promoted on behalf of WCC, was that it was "that kind of dialogue which does not spring spontaneously from life, and is formal, academic, without roots in the deeper being of man".⁴³³ 'Inner dialogue' to listen to the voice of Mystery, is what the Hindus want for participants to experience more than the formal dialogue. On the other hand, he also insisted that the main obstacle to real dialogue were the feelings of superiority and the fear of losing one's own identity.⁴³⁴

Regarding the common human concern, according to Hindus perspective, it was supposed to be free from the religious labels. They criticized such institutions as a 'Christian School', mission hospital,' Catholic Relief Service', etc. This looked like publicity and advertisement, and this is according to him a betrayal to Jesus' teaching 'that even the left hand should ignore the good deeds performed by the right hand'. He said "we should work together in all these things out of our human concern for our brother men and woman in need,

⁴³¹ Rogers 1971:24

⁴³² Rogers 1971:25

⁴³³ Rogers in Samartha 1971:26

⁴³⁴ Rogers 1971:26

without any particular reference to special religious affiliation". He further suggested, 'let us unite our efforts for it, but for God's sake let us give up that selfish habit of putting religious labels on everything good that we do'.⁴³⁵

If we study carefully the Hindu views on Dialogue, especially Prakash's letter to Murray Rogers, Samartha seemingly adopted this concept of 'inner dialogue' very much in his understanding of dialogue with people of other Faiths. He often quoted the same critique from Prakash's letter without giving its reference.⁴³⁶

4.1.6 Summary of perspectives on inter-faith dialogue

Within the Ecumenical circle, in the Roman Catholic Church, and generally among scholars from other religions, Samartha's concept of inter-faith dialogue has been approved and welcomed. The Theo-centric model is generally accepted as a relevant foundation for dialogue among different faiths. In this Theo-centric approach, religions are recognised as equal and they participate together in the worldwide movement for human liberation. Openness towards other religions is seen as the right attitude in maintaining inter-faith dialogue. In the openness, dialogue is expected, as method, to create harmony among the different religious beliefs. Mission, in terms of evangelism as method for spreading the gospel, no longer has particular relevance, but dialogue between different faiths is seen as meaningful. Inter-faith dialogue may not be used for religious propagation, but as a tool for promoting humanity. Dialogue forms part of comparative religion and a social-ethical approach towards life. Dialogue contributes towards peace in politics.

However, there are some small signals of dissatisfaction regarding the achievement of inter-faith dialogue itself, and some disagreement on the practical outcomes of dialogue. Ariarajah, for instance, absolutely agrees with Samartha's concept, however regarding its implementation he states that 'it did not always achieve peace'. David Bosch notes that Samartha's concept of

⁴³⁵ Rogers 1971:26

⁴³⁶ In Samartha's statement about the obstacles to dialogue is mentioned the fear of losing one's identity, as quoted from Prakash's letter to Murray Rogers (1970) cf. Samartha 1981 : x-xi; 1971:26-27

dialogue is not equally relevant in all contexts; and that dialogue and mission can be conducted together in an attitude of humility. Newbigin notes that inter-faith dialogue for justice can not substitute missionary preaching; and Samartha's view about conversion is 'not vertical but horizontal', for the sake of harmony, which may turn out to be a false harmony. Paul Knitter examined Samartha's view of religions in the frame of inter-faith dialogue and even spoke of some aspects of it as relativistic 'pap' in which 'many' means 'any'.

Most of the Evangelical voices, including the convert from Islam to Christianity, disagree with Samartha's statement that monologue in spreading the gospel is a sign of misplaced pride, and see the total openness of Samartha's approach as wrong. Samartha's concept of inter-faith dialogue is seen in these circles as not biblical; and they disagree with Samartha about not using interfaith dialogue as tool even for pre-evangelism, because in this circle dialogue is understood as part of witness.

4.2 The Reception of Samartha's Concept of Inter-Faith Dialogue

There is no doubt that Samartha had made an enormous contribution in Christian theology, especially in Asia through the WCC. His sensitivity to his own Indian context had been inspiring him to find the relevant model of theology for the new plural context of religions, cultures and ideologies. This inspiration was then 'incarnated' in 'dialogue between religious', known as 'inter-faith dialogue'. Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths became a new chapter in the history of WCC ministries, in Asia, Africa, but also in the first world Countries in Europe and America, currently: to rethink the Christian attitude towards other religions.

This journey was not very easy for Samartha, as Klootwijk described in his book *'Openness and Commitment' in the work of Samartha*. This sometimes led Samartha on a lonely road. He often faced the frustration of getting Churches to consider the importance of inter-faith dialogue. He struggled alone against the accusations of syncretism and betrayal of mission, however, Samartha has

been promoting gently and persistently a dialogical attitude of commitment and openness.⁴³⁷

4.2.1 Inspiring the Christians to rethink their attitudes towards other Religions

Apart from the weaknesses of Samartha's concept of dialogue itself, everybody, not only Christians, must admit that Samartha had been inspiring religious scholars, especially Christians, to rethink their own attitudes towards people of other religions. The 'openness' toward other Faiths, such as Samartha applied in maintaining 'inter-faith dialogue' became a good example for the people to know how to start dialogue with people of other Faiths. Klootwijk wrote about Samartha by quoting what Kenneth Cracknel said: 'Samartha has been a pioneer in showing us how Christian theological reflection may be done, and perhaps can best be done in an open way...'⁴³⁸

From Evangelical perspective, this 'openness' was also seen as a positive approach in dialogue toward other religions, but there was also disagreement with Samartha's approach, because to them, Samartha was not only open, but he was far too open! John Stott described him as 'total openness'.⁴³⁹ His own fellow Indians, Sunanda Sumithra and Ken Jnanakan, criticized Samartha's pluralistic concept of dialogue as not biblical and as compromised, 'surrendering some of the essentials of biblical Christian faith, as well as denying the integrity of the Bible and the records of God's dealing with humankind'.⁴⁴⁰ However, Samartha's movement into the 'total openness' in dialogue with people of other faiths also encouraged Christians to get more clarity about where they stand theologically: are they *exclusivist*, *inclusive* or *pluralist*? Samartha himself has shown his theological conversion from exclusivism, and then changed to being *inclusivist*, through his theological study under his professor Devanandan. But eventually, he ended up with being a *pluralist* because of his theological conviction as Indian Christian. This theological conviction will help the Asian young generations, particularly

⁴³⁷ Klootwijk 1992:317

⁴³⁸ Klootwijk 1992:317

⁴³⁹ Stott 1975:60

⁴⁴⁰ Jnanakan 1990: 170

Indonesian theologians, to really understand what they believe in and where they stand.

4.2.2 The necessity of 'Contextualisation' in a plural context

Klootwijk quoted Jongeneel, one of the Dutch theologians, who reckons Samartha among the most important missionary and ecumenical theologians of our time.⁴⁴¹ Even though Samartha later was categorised as liberal (which was also admitted by himself), similar to John Hick and others, but his effort to interpret the Bible within his new hermeneutical approach, in the Indian context, became an enormous starting point for contextualization in many countries in Asia, including Indonesia. In the pluralist context, such as in many countries in Asia, there is simply no other way to interpret the Bible, than contextually.

Samartha, unfortunately, in his approach to the universal God, who is incarnated in Jesus Christ as the one only True God and The Absolute one, mixed up the idea of "Mystery" with "God". This Mystery to him is God, to whom the human religions should respond. This Mystery is present in all religions in a different way and under a different name. Based on this, the Christians cannot claim that the God of the Bible is the only, the absolute, one – the True God, while others are wrong.

The contextualisation which Samartha employed here is leading to 'relativisation'. No religion can claim absoluteness and exclusiveness about which one the true God is. All claims are correct: that there is a God which is Mystery. The human being cannot grasp him as a whole, because He is such a Mystery. Samartha came to this conclusion, because he wanted to create peace and harmony between all religions in India, and eventually the world: Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and all the others.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴¹ Klootwijk (1992:318) quoted from Jongeneel's book in Dutch *Leven, denken en werken van Stanley J. Samartha*, p.10

⁴⁴² Samartha 1991:4

One of the immediate effects of this “wrong” contextualisation in Indonesia is that some Christians were taught to turn to ‘their local gospel’, instead of learning the message of the gospel in the Bible, which was (according to the local theologians) based on a foreign culture (Jewish, Greek and Western culture). Many Indonesian Christians are searching the ‘message of the truth’ within their own culture: through rediscovery of the old stories in their old traditions such as legends, parables and occults which are related to their ancestor worship.⁴⁴³

Klootwijk is correct in his evaluation of Samartha: ‘In dialogue, we may indeed acknowledge the universality of God’s work for all people. Samartha also makes a point when relativizing the religious claims to absoluteness and exclusiveness. But this relativization should be based upon a distinction between God’s universal work of salvation and the human religious response’.⁴⁴⁴ Klootwijk means by this, that on the one hand, God is really working salvation in all religions, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But on the other hand, the human religious response to God’s work is so diverse, and the diversities must be respected by all religious believers, without any compulsion to adopt or to reject it.

4.2.3 Re-discovery of Asian theology

Most of the countries in Asia, as indicated above, are pluralist in culture and religions. Most of them (if not all), were colonized by western forces, where Christianity was also brought by western missionaries who were usually working together with the colonial government. Since then until their independence and even up till today, Western theology is still more dominant in the Churches and the Seminaries’ teaching. Western theology was understood as culturally “neutral”. Often it was exported as a worldwide valid theology to non-western cultures. So, the process of ‘Christianization’ became equivalent to ‘westernization.’

⁴⁴³ Natar 2004:91

⁴⁴⁴ Klootwijk 1992:318

Through the impact of contextualization in theology, and the need for dialogue with people of other faiths, Asian theologians started to realize how important it is to have their own theology in their own Asian context. On December 2nd-5th 2002, forty-seven Asian theologians gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, to discuss about 'teaching theology in Asia'. This conference was to evaluate the curricula at the Seminaries and Theological colleges in Asia, including in Indonesia. The conference eventually agreed that the basis for an Asian theology lay in three aspects: *contextuality*, *inter-culturality* and the *gender perspective*.⁴⁴⁵

Contextuality here means that in the Asian context there is a need to develop theologies that are intentionally worked out from their own context: that those theologies are meaningful and relevant to the context out of which they are born.⁴⁴⁶ *Interculturality* means that Christian theology is part of a whole, the integrative part and not to be isolated from the universal unity. This plurality in unity can only function if there is a dialogue between people, between theologians of different cultural contexts. About the *gender perspective*: here the point is that equality between women and men can be reached, including the official level of the Church structures in Asia. Samartha was correct when he raised the topic of 'feminism' as one of the hermeneutical issues for his new approach in Asia.⁴⁴⁷

The Asian theologians are working hard to rediscover their own original cultures and religions, to build up their own theology – an Asian theology. These cultures and religions were almost buried by Western theological domination. If in Africa and Latin America, in reaction to this hegemony, was then born liberation theology, in Indonesia we know 'Crucy theology' by Andreas A.Yewangoe and 'beggarly theology' by Albert Wijaya'; 'Water buffalo Theology' in Thailand by Kosuke Koyama and 'a theology of the womb' by Choan Seng Song in Taiwan.⁴⁴⁸ Most of these new theologies are based on the cultures, economy and social-political needs in each of these Asian countries. These teachings

⁴⁴⁵ Website of theology in Asia:<http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr003/Annette.htm>, Nov.23th. 20.25h

⁴⁴⁶ Su 1997:25

⁴⁴⁷ Klotwijk 1992:215

⁴⁴⁸ Deane William 2008

enable the people of Asia to dialogue to each other beyond the religions' boundaries.

4.2.4 Encouraging Christians to be more Realistic, instead of being 'Dreamer Christians'

One of the weaknesses of Evangelical Theology is too much talking about heaven but lack of involvement with the social issues in the communities. There is a self criticism between the evangelical theologians that says: 'we run too quickly to heaven but are too late to walk into the world'. Yewangoe raised the same criticism from non-Christians towards Christians in Indonesia, already in 1928. Non-Christian Indonesians accused Christians of a lack of nationalism and only serving the interest of colonial regimes.⁴⁴⁹

Samartha's concept of dialogue with people of other faiths encourages the Christians to engage more in solving the social issues in the communities. Particularly in the plural countries in Asian context, there is no other way, but that Christians have to rethink their theology if they want to reach out to other Faiths. Non-Christians must not be targeted for only proselytism, as Samartha had correctly insisted, but rather reach out to them as partners in solving the social problems together in the community.

Georg Ever, in his assessment on the 50th anniversary of the founding of WCC, highlighted as an achievement an obvious trend in the ecumenical movement the fact that churches were dealing with contemporary problems which would call for a common Christian witness and common inter-religious cooperation in the form of a 'world ethos'. This concerted effort by all religiously committed people and institutions to work together in fields like globalization of the market economy, genetic engineering, ecological catastrophes, defence of human rights, fight against hunger and poverty, the worldwide problem of drugs and many other burning issues of to day, surely deserves praise. He notes that it would be wrong to be overly pessimistic that the institutional concerns of people

⁴⁴⁹Yewangoe 1996:292

in the religious institutions are shared by all their constituents in whose name these religious functionaries claim to act.⁴⁵⁰

This is one of the positive achievements by WCC during 50 years since WCC was founded, where Samartha was known as one of the engineers of this achievement. On the other hand, Evers also sees the failure of WCC regarding this 'dialogue' after fifty years of WCC, where some of its members want to withdraw from WCC because of disagreement with WCC about their way to implement 'dialogue' with other faiths, such as common prayer and liturgical services. The Orthodox Church of Georgia has declared its withdrawal from WCC in May 1997.⁴⁵¹

4.2.5 Avoiding Religio-monism

Religio-monism is when someone put religion as a goal of everything and as above everything in his life. Doing all activities in the name of religion, no matter whether societies is agreed or not, is called religio-monism.

Samartha's concept of dialogue with people of other Faiths is avoiding religio-monism when he said that no one religion can claim the absolute truth. Even though I disagree with Samartha in relativizing the one Truth, but to me, religions as human responses to the Divine Being are on the same level, relatively. No one religion can claim herself as the only True one or the perfect one, because as a human response, there will be no one perfect in the world. Each religion can talk about God, but it does not mean that its ideas about God are the only ones that grasp God.

Religions as human effort to grasp God (the Divine Being) can only talk about God as far as the human could understand God. But there might be a religion who can talk about God more than others, because God reveals Himself through specific ways in this religion that other religions do not have. As God's

⁴⁵⁰ Evers 1998:3

⁴⁵¹ Evers 1998:3

revelation, this religion might not have enough words or languages to communicate what God had revealed, because the world languages would not be sufficient enough to communicate the whole being about the universe and the heavenly God. This does not mean that this religion is superior to others, because the human responses are still involved in this communication.

In relation to Christianity, even though God's revelation about Himself had been revealed to the human being through Jesus' incarnation, the history of religions has proven that human responses to God's incarnation have elicited various and different interpretations. It means that the human responses in this interpretation must be taken as relative, and need to be tested by Jesus' statements in the Bible, when he was still in the world.

The Absolute Truth here is God's revelation through Jesus Christ, and not what religion said. It could be found in one religion, but could also shine through in other religions. If in Christianity was claimed that Jesus talked about His oneness with God His Father, does in Judaism Moses not also talk about God as his father? Does other religion not also talk about God as Father? From here we will know to figure out the 'fatherhood of God' and what it means for the human being.

In other words, God's economy is more than any religion can communicate. Religions as human responses to God's revelation are relative in whatever they claim as the truth, but God Himself and His revelation are the absolute Truth. Human response involves human interpretation, but God's revelation remains as the absolute truth.

4.3 The Critique of Samartha's Concept of Inter-Faith Dialogue

Besides listening to the discussions with different scholars about inter-faith dialogue, in this passage I also want to present the original motif of Samartha behind his concept of dialogue with people of other faiths.

4.3.1 The Original motif

Konrad Raiser, in his tribute to Samartha, summarized a view of Samartha's writing on which his concept of dialogue with other faiths was based on:

*“The critical function of Christian theologians in India and elsewhere is to speak and write courageously against uncritical conformity to tradition, emphasizing that devotion to Christ and discipleship of Jesus in the face of the striking changes taking place in contemporary history, demand changed attitudes on the part of Christians to their neighbours in the country and in the world. They need to raise new questions, suggest new answers and broaden the theological space for critical discussion in the freedom of the Spirit within the koinonia of the church.”*⁴⁵²

Interpreting Raiser's summary of Samartha's writing, we can discern four major points what Samartha intended to say: *first*, Samartha clearly expected the Indian theologians particularly, and Asian theologians (including Indonesia) generally to *engage more critically* with the theological tradition in the Asian context. Why? Because most (if not all) of the theological teaching or Christian doctrines in Asian churches were 'exported' by Western countries together with their culture, and uncritically consumed by Asian people, who as a matter of fact, are having a totally different culture as the one that brought the Christian tradition. In view of this, Samartha encouraged his fellow Asians to speak up to this tradition, verbally and through writing.

In his book *'One Christ many religions'*, Samartha strongly criticized the way Christianity came to Asia and Africa by the Western countries through colonialism and oppression of the people who already had their own religions. He even criticized the country which gave birth to the Reformation, but committed murder of millions of people during the Holocaust. He then ironically questioned: 'If Christianity was unable to prevent these horrors in countries over

⁴⁵² Konrad Raiser was summarising Samartha's ideas which he probably read from his biography, especially Samartha's book *'Between two cultures'*, but also quoting the Addis Ababa Statement (1971), as presented by Johnson (1975:99).

which it held sway for so many centuries, why export it to people in other countries who live by other faiths?⁴⁵³

For Samartha, the Christians who do not want to question the tradition they received as heritage from the Western tradition, especially the teaching about Christ and the Bible that make exclusive claims and is condemning other religions to an inferior status to be humiliated, are still colonized, not just only physically, but spiritually as well.⁴⁵⁴ Samartha wanted to say that the indigenous religions which already exist in Asia and other parts of the world besides Christianity, are enough to keep them living in peace and harmony with each other.⁴⁵⁵

Second, Samartha stated that the theological paradigms that were initiated in the Asian context, were automatically different from the dominant Western view. In the Western context, especially before the Second World War, as devoted Christians and disciple of Jesus, the European Christians interpreted Jesus' teaching exclusively and literally. The Great Commission was understood as sending them as devout disciples of Jesus Christ out to other worlds and convert the people to be like them culturally, and having a new religion like theirs, called "Christianity".

Samartha sees this attitude as no longer relevant to the Asian context, and as something that has to be interpreted differently. In the Asian context, there are many religions that also worship God and believe in God as Creator. These religions are part of the cultures of the bigger community of Asians. Their cultures are helping them not to be exclusive, but inclusive and to see each other as close neighbours in the community. Christianity, ironically, had changed many Asians to make the church become an isolated island separated from the community where they came from. The Christians only think to be related to their neighbours in the frame of 'proselytism', as object of possible

⁴⁵³ Samartha 1991:2

⁴⁵⁴ Samartha 1991:3

⁴⁵⁵ Samartha 1991:2

conversion to Christianity. To this theological concept, Samartha proposed 'a change of attitudes toward neighbours' for Asian context.

Third, Samartha called Asian theologians to question the irrelevance of western theological concepts, and to find a new concept: an Asian concept for the Asian context, where everyone counted simply as human, as neighbours to the others without hierarchy or special privilege, irrespective of religions or traditions. To find such a new concept, or 'new answer', Samartha believes it is only possible by broadening Asian theologians' views and openness to critical discussion with people of other religions.

This idea is supported by Samartha's statement in his book '*One Christ many religions*' where he is referring to the colonialism of the past. He asserts: "Even in the colonial period, during their struggle for political independence (particularly in Asian countries like India), many people sought spiritual support in their own cultural and religious resources. This is true, for example, of Hinduism in India, Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and Islam in the West Asian countries... With the retreat of colonialism at the end of the second world war, the emerging new nations in Asia and Africa sought to build their identities on the basis of their own religions and cultural values rather than those imposed from outside"⁴⁵⁶. Samartha's intention here is to build the Asian identity on its Asian origins, religiously and culturally, rather than an imposed Christian and cultural identity from outside.

Four, Samartha's effort 'to suggest new answers and broaden the theological space for critical discussion in the freedom of the spirit', means that the new theological solution is not depending on the western theological traditions, but on the Asian context today. In other words, in terms of Asian theological concepts, let them formulate their own identity; let the Asians be Asians.

The stigma in the colonial way of thinking to separate "Western and non-Western", and distinguish the differences between "Europeans and Asians",

⁴⁵⁶ Samartha 1991:2

became an analogy which Samartha found to the Western way of separating 'Christians and non-Christians'.

The western Christians' superiority feeling must not contaminate the Asian's original traditions and religions. So therefore, one has to ask whether Asian identity, Asian nationalism, was not the driving motif for Samartha's action on dialogue with people of other living faiths; whether his resentment about colonial imposition of identity and culture on Asians was not disguised in statements on 'how Christians should relate to their neighbours who has different faiths and ideologies', since Addis Ababa 1971.

He openly declared this resentment by criticizing western colonialism that viewed Asia also as part of the third world. He said: "To affirm plurality is one way of fighting against this persistent tendency. Religious pluralism thus provides resources for the survival of peoples and nations against forces that openly or covertly seek to impose uniformity on a pluralist world".⁴⁵⁷ To him, fighting against colonialism in Asia and Africa in the past was not just a matter of economic well-being or political adjustment in power relationships. It was a struggle for identity, a quest for spiritual resources against injustice. He adds: "The rejection of religious pluralism, the refusal to recognize that neighbours of other faiths in the world live by their own cherished beliefs and values, is a more serious form of injustice than the merely economic".⁴⁵⁸

So therefore, to understand Samartha's concept of Inter-Religious Dialogue, I believe, it has to be understood from two different dimensions: *firstly*, as *retaliation* by Asians for the social-economic and political suffering due to Western colonialism in the past centuries. *Secondly*, as *rejection* by Asians of Western theologians' arrogance and doctrinal domination in Church history, and the way they look at other Asian's religions.

He agrees with Ashis Nandy, that 'colonialism is not only a matter of economic exploitation, but also the organized repression of the cultural life of a people to

⁴⁵⁷ Samartha 1991:3

⁴⁵⁸ Samartha 1991:2

make them accept other values as superior'.⁴⁵⁹ This is what Samartha wanted to change; he wanted to illuminate (and eliminate!) the superiority feeling from Christianity that may continue even in a formulation such as 'Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths'.

4.3.2 A continuing 'false harmony': an evidence of the inconsistency between the "guideline to dialogue" and the outcome of "inter-faith dialogue" itself

In his tentative suggestion, point two, Samartha insisted that dialogue 'should not lead to the dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony'. It is very ideal and the normal expectation, if the real harmony out of dialogue with people of other faiths actually happens in the community. This is a very positive statement and expectation, in fact, in many dialogues between Christian and other religions, particularly with Muslims, the contrary outcome is usually happening.⁴⁶⁰ The Christian minority is an easy target of the Muslim majority. How many times has Samartha been in dialogue with the Muslim leaders from Indonesia, since the Ajaltoun meeting 1970, and how many documents had been produced by those dialogue? In the implementation of that dialogue, the ecumenical churches in Indonesia had ignored the Great Commission of Jesus, and translated mission into social humanity for the sake of 'inter-religious dialogue'. Nevertheless, Christians and the Churches in Indonesia are still marginalized in their own country. Religious tension is remaining a main social-political issue, and "dead to Christians" is still an ongoing slogan by Muslims until this day. While inter-religious dialogue is still a 'continuing discussion' here and there, as Samartha defined it, the real outcome of it in Indonesia, and in many parts of the globe, maybe is only a 'continuing false harmony'. This shows

⁴⁵⁹ Samartha 1991:3

⁴⁶⁰ The objective of dialogue is not a superficial consensus or the finding of the most acceptable common factor. It should not lead to the dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony. It must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of Truth.

19 Addis Ababa point seven "Dialogue is concerned with much more than talking together. It is a process in which individuals and communities learn to lose their fear and distrust of each other and enter into a new confidence. It is thus a dynamic contact of life with life, concerned with living together and acting together."

20 Addis Ababa, point seven: "Dialogue is concerned with much more than talking together. It is a process in which individuals and communities learn to lose their fear and distrust of each other and enter into a new confidence. It is thus a dynamic contact of life with life, concerned with living together and acting together."

the inconsistency between the guideline to dialogue and the result of inter-faith dialogue itself.

The Addis Ababa statement, point seven,⁴⁶¹ is a parallel idea with this matter which was probably influenced by Samartha's tentative suggestion point three.⁴⁶²

The emphasized point here, from point three (tentative suggestions), is "...living together in dialogue should help communities - particularly in multi-religious societies - to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence."⁴⁶³ This idea is still parallel with point two (tentative suggestions) that the objective of dialogue "is not a superficial consensus or the finding of the most acceptable common factor. It should not lead to the dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony. It must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of Truth." Those points, two and three, implicitly influenced Addis Ababa point seven as Policy and Interim guidelines to dialogue.⁴⁶⁴

It must be admitted, that this point is the most difficult to be implemented in the history of mankind in society. The Christian imperialism in the worldwide story had created tension and fear in many parts of the world, which in the past experienced the hardships of colonialism. This fear and suspicion from other faiths toward Christianity is the most difficult thing to be erased from the heart of many people even though by dialogue itself. The same thing happened when the non-Christians were living as a minority among the Christian majority. The fear of being a target for proselytism by Christians is always something unavoidable in the feelings of many non-Christians. On the other hand, the minority Christians among the majority non-Christians, especially Muslims such as in Indonesia, are feeling intimidated. In this case, the suggestion of dialogue

⁴⁶¹ Samartha (1971:50) wrote it as follows: "Dialogue is concerned with much more than talking together. It is a process in which individuals and communities learn to lose their fear and distrust of each other and enter into a new confidence. It is thus a dynamic contact of life with life, concerned with living together and acting together."

⁴⁶² Samartha 1996:81

⁴⁶³ Samartha 1996:81

⁴⁶⁴ Samartha 1971:50

might be a solution, even though in reality it may not always be so. The friendly love relationship in the daily life is still the best way to overcome fear and distrust.

According to Batak Church voice (Suara HKBP) report on the destruction to Christian churches and schools buildings in Indonesia from March 30th 1996 to September 4th 2005, about 211 Churches and Christian School buildings had been destroyed by Muslim groups who called themselves Islam Defender Front (FPI).⁴⁶⁵ Where is the harmony and peace which Samartha and WCC are dreaming of? Christians in many countries had sacrificed their “beliefs” (their Christian traditions according to Samartha) for the sake of harmony and dialogue with their neighbours, but ‘disharmony’ is an increasing experience among the communities in Indonesia, and ‘injustice’ upon the Christians become their ‘daily bread’.

Where in the world we can find that dialogue really created ‘harmony and peace’ between people of different religions? India, Indonesia, Sudan, Nigeria? If any harmony in this countries came out of Christian dialogue with people of other faiths, without marginalizing others, it is only ‘a false harmony’ especially in a context where Muslims are predominant. Fundamentally, according to Sura 5:54, Muslims can never treat Christians as their own brothers, because for them, non believers (Christians and other non Muslims) are their enemy.⁴⁶⁶

The Addis Ababa statement (in its preamble) also emphasized that dialogue is inevitably urgent, and full of opportunity. I quote as follows:

“The World Council of Churches through the life and witness of its constituent churches and through the activities it undertakes on their behalf is involved in manifold relationships with people in different countries. Dialogue, understood as a human activity in which spiritual, intellectual and practical elements are

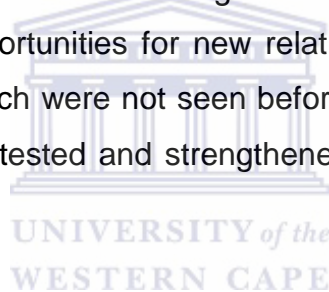
⁴⁶⁵ Liu (2005:58; 2005:54-57) in this report, was not yet including the Churches were destroyed before March 1996 and after September 2005.

⁴⁶⁶ Yusuf Ali (1946:259) translated to English as follows: “Ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other.

involved, is a natural part of this relationship. At the present time it is inevitable, urgent and full of opportunity. It is inevitable because everywhere in the world Christians are now living in pluralistic societies. It is urgent because all men are under common pressures in the search for justice, peace and hopeful future. It is full of opportunity because Christians can now, in new ways, discover new implications for the witness of the church in the context of moving towards a common human community."⁴⁶⁷

By comparing this *preamble* with Samartha's six principle of his tentative suggestion, it is clear that Samartha's tentative suggestions, especially points *one and two* (above) was inspiring the Addis Ababa Statement⁴⁶⁸. This idea was repeated in point *eight*:

'Dialogue offers the promise of discovering new dimensions of understanding our faith. It also offers opportunities for new relationships between Christians and men of other faiths which were not seen before. Moreover, in dialogue our Christian faith can also be tested and strengthened. Such dialogues therefore are a sign of hope.'⁴⁶⁹



Samartha's expectation from dialogue in this point has been too high. He was idealistically persistent that through 'dialogue', the Christians will discover the new dimensions of understanding of Christian faith; that dialogue also offers an opportunity for new relationships with men of other Faiths. However, how could it be allowed that Christianity must be corrected by another faith that does not recognize who Jesus Christ really is? The new dimensions that Samartha suggests here is only possible if Christian agree to what other religions said about Christ, e.g. Jesus was not crucified for men's sin; He is not the Son of God, etc.

And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily God guided not a people unjust." (Surah 5:54)

⁴⁶⁷ Samartha 1971:47

⁴⁶⁸Tentative suggestion (point 1): The basis of inter-religious dialogue is the commitment of all partners to their respective faiths and their Openness to the insights of the others. The integrity of particular religions must be recognized.

(Point 2):The objective of dialogue is not a superficial consensus or the finding of the most acceptable common factor. It should no lead to the dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony. It must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of Truth.

This idea Influenced by Samartha's tentative *suggestion point six*; "Inter-religious dialogue should also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life...world religious organizations should support the long range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just separately by individuals of each religion, but also together in the larger interests of humanity." The emphasized point here is that dialogue is very urgent, and the commitment and openness of all partners to their respective faiths is the basis for inter-religious dialogue.

In the openness to the insights and recognition of other religions, Samartha saw the opportunity for Christians to discover the new implications for the witness of the church, but this definitely not in the context of evangelism such early churches did; to the contrary, it is done in the context of common human community. To achieve a 'common human need' in the community as the goal of dialogue is counted as 'moving forward', but doing evangelism for the sake of individual salvation, was seen as 'backward'.

4.3.3 Promoting 'a false freedom'?

The Addis Ababa statement *point ten* emphasized that "Dialogue must take place in freedom. This is a repeat and the continuation of the idea from point two: "...Jesus Christ who makes us free..."⁴⁷⁰ The repeated idea was: "each partner must be understood as he understands himself, and his freedom to be committed to his faith must be fully respected. Without this freedom to be committed, to be open, to witness, to change and to be changed, genuine dialogue is impossible."⁴⁷¹ The freedom in this point is seemingly parallel to

⁴⁶⁹ Samartha 1971:50

⁴⁷⁰ Samartha (1971:48) wrote at Addis Ababa Statement, point 2 as follows: "Our faith in Jesus Christ who became man for all men in all times sustains us in dialogue. The expression of these faiths in the life and witness of the Church leads us to develop relationships with men of different faiths and ideologies. Jesus Christ who makes us free draws us out of isolation into genuine dialogue into which we enter with faith in the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Compare with the tentative suggestion point (3) "Dialogue should not be limited to more academic discussion on religious matters. I may begin among specially delegated people within a limited compass and later on spread into wider circles involving larger numbers of people living together in dialogue should help communities-particularly in multi-religious societies to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence."

⁴⁷¹ Samartha 1971:51

what Samartha had written in the six principles (in his 'Tentative suggestion to dialogue'), point six, including the freedom to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life.⁴⁷²

The emphasised idea to 'study' in this point is about Jesus' incarnation (Jesus who became a man for all men in all times) as basic for dialogue. This incarnation, according to Samartha, makes us free and draws us out of isolation. In other words, Christians must not be isolated by their religion on an island, out of fear or distrust to dialogue with other non-Christians. In dialogue, and through openness to others, we overcome fear or distrust to each other, and we build up mutual trust and confidence.⁴⁷³

The freedom which could be created in Christian dialogue with people of other faiths is a freedom to talk, freedom to question, freedom to study, freedom to take a commitment, and freedom to change a commitment. Why, because religion, according to Samartha, is only 'a man's response to a mystery of existence and quests for meaning in the midst of confusion.' In other words, religion has no divine value which makes it to have a special authority upon the people. Here it is not clear if God really exists, or is simply 'The Mystery'.

The question is: does the freedom really exist in the Christian dialogue with people of other faiths? That is a great encouragement to study other religions: to know what other people believe and why they do believe what they believe. But the crucial question is: do the Muslims accept if the other party ask question about the legacy of Muhammad as prophet in the forum of inter-religious dialogue? Will they accept when the other party is questioning the existence of their 'holy Book', similar to other books being questioned as sent down from Heaven? They will be feeling offended, because they believe the divine authority in these two very important things of their religion. So therefore,

⁴⁷² Point 6; "Inter religious dialogues should also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life. Religions are man's responses to the mystery of existence and quests for meaning in the midst of confusion. World religious organizations should support the long-range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just separately by individuals of each religion. But also together in the larger interest of humanity."

⁴⁷³ Samartha's tentative suggestions point 3 (1996:81) has clearly inspired the Addis Ababa statement, point 2.

Samartha's definition about religion 'as only human response to the Mystery' will not be acceptable for this group.

Looking at the 'freedom' found in the dialogue forum held by Samartha, is when the other partners freely humiliate Christianity by asking questions which never really have a clear answer in the Christian history of theology, such as 'the trinity', because it is indeed the mystery of God in the Bible. So what is the freedom in maintaining dialogue with people of other Faiths? If the freedom is also meant to set up dialogue as carefully as possible to avoid the sensitive questions, it means, there will be no real freedom within dialogue as such. Then Samartha is dreaming of a fake freedom or false freedom.

4.3.4 A false mutual trust?

Another outcome we found in the Addis Ababa Statement which was probably Influenced by Samartha's tentative suggestion, is a 'false mutual trust'. In the Addis Ababa Statement, point three, is stated: "... The meeting with men of other faiths or of no faith must lead to dialogue. A Christian's dialogue with another implies neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of his own commitment to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble."⁴⁷⁴

Again in the 'interim guidelines to dialogue', Samartha's tentative suggestion, point three, was emphasised, especially the idea of 'mutual trust and confidence'. This point is a repetition of the WCC assembly statement in Uppsala 1968, that dialogue must be human, personal, relevant and humble. This idea was so strongly emphasized in Addis Ababa statement, because of Samartha's motif to change the image of Christian approach towards other religions as fixed in the colonial's time. To him, the missionary approach in the colonial time, and even to this day by many western missionaries in Asia, was not really done in a human, personal and humble way.

⁴⁷⁴ Samartha (1971:48) repeated the point was affirmed at Uppsala 1968

Samartha's point in this matter is understandable. Proselytism in the colonial time, through forcing others to accept the new religion, is totally unacceptable. Christianity's bad image from those missionary times is not because of the message of the gospel itself, but because of the abuse of the Gospel by the Colonial powers which was communicated in a typical western way. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that evangelism has to be taken out of the Church and replaced with 'dialogue', which is only talk about the human condition. If the word of evangelism has received a connotation with Christian arrogance, this must be changed with humbleness. Colonialism brought and spread Christianity with a superiority feeling and arrogance, but Jesus Christ spread His messages with love and humility.

These were two contradicting ways. This is the reason why it is so important and urgent to find a new way for the missionary approach in modern days to spread the Gospel of Jesus without humiliating others. In the Addis Ababa statement, point 4f., we read "...Christians in many countries are not just talking about dialogue; they are already involved at various levels and are at many points committed to it in the context of living relationship with people of other faiths and ideologies."⁴⁷⁵

Samartha defended that the dialogue he promoted is neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of commitment to Christ. However, from many experiences it has been seen that people who are practicing 'inter-faith dialogue' have by and large lacked the commitment in spreading the verbal gospel of Jesus Christ. They become more active in their Christian social work, or various activities with others, without any desire to challenge others about the assurance of their eternal life. Dialogue such as Samartha developed, which is based on mutual trust and common human concern, is counted as a sign of renewal in the societies. Yet, within the contemporary missiological perspective,

⁴⁷⁵ The Addis Ababa statement point four (Samartha 1971:48) 1996:81 was probably influenced by Samartha's tentative suggestion point three (1996:81) '...to build up mutual trust and confidence.' "Dialogue should not be limited to more academic discussion on religious matters. I may begin among specially delegated people within a limited compass and later on spread into wider circles involving larger numbers of people living together in dialogue should help communities-particularly in multi religious societies to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence."

this fact is of course seen as a backward sign of the Church not being obedient to the great commission of witnessing to the gospel.

He admits that dialogue between Christians and other faiths is not a totally new venture. In many countries, Christians have lived with other faiths. What Samartha had forgotten at this point is, he mixed up 'organised dialogue' and the 'normal living relationship' between men of different faiths. The WCC documents of dialogue studied here is not about the living relationship between men of different faiths (in terms of daily life), but the organised dialogue, where the mutual trust is not necessarily genuine enough.

4.3.5 Loving others without Loving Jesus?

The Addis Ababa statement point 5 was supported by Samartha's tentative suggestion to dialogue point one: 'In the light of the experience of both bilateral and multilateral dialogues certain points emerge for recognition and certain issues need further reflection...Christians enter into all forms of dialogue from the standpoint of their faiths in Jesus Christ and their obligation to witness to him. Love requires us to recognize and respect the integrity of our partners who enter into dialogue from the standpoint of their faith and commitment.'⁴⁷⁶

This statement (Addis Ababa point five) has obviously been inspired by Samartha's tentative suggestion, point one: 'the basis of inter-religious dialogue is the commitment of all partners to their respective faiths...' Samartha here seems to contradict himself by distinguishing between love to Jesus by Christians and love to others. He said that when the Christians witness about Jesus to others, it is because of the Christian obligation to him, but to respect and to recognise our partner in dialogue from the standpoint of their religion is because human love requires that.

The love of Jesus is supposed to motivate the Christians to witness to others, and in that witness nothing but 'to love' others. To love others in dialogue or not dialogue, Christians have to express their respect, no matter what the others'

religions are. To witness does not mean to confront others or humiliating others for the purpose of proselytism. Jesus said to His disciples: if you love me, you will obey my commands, to witness to others.⁴⁷⁷ This is a missing point from Samartha.

The people of other Faiths may not like it when the Christians are witnessing the love of Jesus they experience, but this is usually not the case. To witness the love of Jesus to others does not always mean proselytism, as is normally interpreted in Samartha's concept. For the Christians, whether the partner likes or dislikes what they say about Jesus, it does not have to reduce their love towards their partners, because again, love covers everything. If Christians stand with genuine love and care to their neighbours in the community, 'fear and distrust' will never be taking place in the society. Daily relationship to their neighbours will prove whether their Christian neighbours can be trusted or not.

4.3.6 Relativising the Truth

When examining the six principles by Samartha, point 2 spells out the expected outcome: "...It must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of Truth". Samartha here, sees Christianity as in the same situation as the other religions; with other non-Christians the Christians are on one journey, a journey to discover the truth. Jesus' statement of Himself as 'The Truth', for Samartha, has to be seen not as propositional but as relational. He means that the Truth in Jesus' self declaration is not an absolute or ultimate truth, but one of many truths from God. Other Faiths also have their own truths from God. They are busy searching through their devotion and worship in their own traditions and cultures, religions and ideologies. In this journey, all mankind are together in what is understood as 'a common adventure'.⁴⁷⁸

Raguin, a professor from Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies in Taiwan, supports this concept. He agrees that the search is still painful, because we are not sure

⁴⁷⁶ Samartha 1971:49

⁴⁷⁷ John 14:15

⁴⁷⁸ Samartha (1971:51), for "Addis Ababa Statement, II B. 11."

that the Christ we figure out is the real Christ. So therefore, he further suggests, if we want to start a fruitful dialogue, we all have to acknowledge that we are searching, searching for the real meaning of what we believe, and for the real face of the one in whom we believe. After all, he adds; “we must agree that there are many ways to search for God and to be saved, while believing that Christ is the ultimate revealer of God and saviour of men. The fact that we see him as the absolute Way does not mean that there are no other ways”.⁴⁷⁹

Raguin here, like Samartha, is relativising the ‘Absolute Truth’ in Jesus. Samartha is ignoring the connection between Jesus’ statement ‘I am The Truth’ and the unity of Jesus and His Father-God: ‘I and My Father are one, and whoever sees me, sees The Father’. The Father is God - the Absolute one. Raguin seems to contradict himself about Christ as the absolute Way and other ways, and as the ultimate revealer of God and Saviour of men. But he himself basically supports Samartha.

Religious pluralism, according to Samartha, is the fact that different religions respond to the Mystery of Ultimate Reality or ‘Sat’ or ‘Theos’ in different ways – and it is important because it touches ultimate questions about human life and destiny, which need to be acknowledged as valid. To break down the walls of separation, even hostility, between these different responses that have petrified through centuries of isolation, a new vocabulary is needed to facilitate communication between people of different faiths.⁴⁸⁰ Samartha strongly argued for the necessity of dialogue and inter-religious pluralism and said “this is necessary, both for mutual criticism and mutual enrichment. Therefore, we need the all-embracing philosophy and theology of pluralism within which alone the fact and right of religious pluralism can be situated, and their otherness and inter-relatedness fully understood and expressed”⁴⁸¹

Samartha criticized the Evangelical view of the absoluteness of the Truth in Jesus’ statement in the Bible: “I am the Truth.”⁴⁸² To him, the exclusive

⁴⁷⁹ Raguin 1977:76

⁴⁸⁰ Samartha 1991:4

⁴⁸¹ Samartha 1991:5

⁴⁸² John 6:14

claiming of Christ, without first testing the language in the context of pluralism, is insensitive, and closes the door of hope for mutual criticism and mutual enrichment. He writes: “Exclusive claims that seek to suppress plurality, proclaimed through a set of words in a language other than that of religions against which they are directed, and which are untested in the forum of plurality and unwilling to risk the enactment of faith in a pluralistic society, erect a barrier against future possibilities. Such claims are insensitive to the accents that come from within the silence of the heart. They miss the mood of awe and reverence and silence before the Mystery of God and close the door of hope for mutual criticism and mutual enrichment”.⁴⁸³

From this description it is clear that Samartha’s promotion of his concept of dialogue with people of other faiths is based on denial of the ultimate Truth in Jesus Christ, and embracing the pluralism of the truth in the pluralism of religions and philosophy. He did this as he is consistent to point one of ‘six principles of Guidelines from Addis Ababa statement’, “...*openness to the insight of the others*”. It means he was open to add the other “truths” into “Jesus’ truth”. It was understandable why he adopted this way, because these were the demands of pluralism in the Hindu context.

4.3.7 Elevating Humanism

The Addis Ababa Statement point six states that ‘humanity’ is the goal of Christ’s redemption.⁴⁸⁴, and point nine emphasises the purpose of dialogue in ‘multilateral dialogue’ as (i) for the sake of common action in the service of men in pluralistic societies; (ii) for the sake of better mutual understanding between people of living faiths and ideologies; (iii) for the sake of indigenisation of the

⁴⁸³ Samartha 1991:5

⁴⁸⁴ Samartha (1971:49) wrote in the Addis Ababa statement, Point 6, as follows: “...Therefore dialogue cannot and must not be confined to men of religious faiths but must also involve men of secular ideologies. Further, in humanity as we experience it and as we look for its fulfilment in Christ the “spiritual” and the “material” cannot be separated, but constantly impinge on each other in our common quest for the well-being of man. “In dialogue we share our common humanity, its dignity and fallenness, and express our common concern for that humanity.” This point was probably influenced by Samartha’s tentative suggestion point 5.a. as follows in the next footnote.

Christian faith in different cultures.⁴⁸⁵ This is parallel with six tentative suggestions by Samartha, point five.⁴⁸⁶

Point six of the Addis Ababa emphasises humanity as being fulfilled by Christ. The point of dialogue must not only be about the issues of religions among the men of religious faiths, but also about ideologies, because to Samartha, both materially and spiritually the destiny of humanity can not be separated from its fulfilment in Christ.

Through this wide agenda, Samartha made the concept of dialogue with people of other faiths here become even more uncertain. The issues of faith between the people of different religions is not yet solved, but now he wants this unresolved dialogue to involve other ideologies, that clearly do not recognise the value of religion, and even more, deny God's existence. Samartha wants to bring 'west and the east' together, or combine 'the negative power with the positive'. Can it really work?

His main motifs since the beginning, about 'common human concern' and 'justice and peace for the poor', are found so strongly in the statements quoted here. His main concern is for the 'poor people in Asia and particularly India' as part of the two third world countries, and as victims of colonialism; concretely, these are the people foremost in Samartha's mind when he emphasised the purpose of the concept of dialogue.

In his book *One Christ many religions*, in which he explains the context in which Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru fought against British for their identity as Hindus,

⁴⁸⁵Samartha 1971:50

⁴⁸⁶ Samartha (1996:81) wrote at Point 5 as follows: "With reference to strengthening the efforts for peace the following points may be noted: a) People of different religious persuasions should be brought together *to consider common human concerns* in which all are involved irrespective of their religious affiliations. These may be different countries and social situations. b) In the interest of *justice and peace* it is necessary for world religions to come out more openly *on the side of the poor, the powerless and the oppressed*. Mere quoting of scriptures is not enough: it should be matched by deeds. Religious values that can not be translated in to social virtues are worse than useless where human needs are urgent. Inter-religious dialogues should promoted deliberation and action on such common concerns. c) World religious organization should manifest greater concern *to work for peace in particular situations where there are conflicts*. Statements on international situations may be of less value than some symbolic actions by inter-religious group's in particular countries."

Samartha suggested that Islam and Christianity in India, whose historic roots and religious identities are outside the country, had to re-draw their profiles in order to make a significant contribution to the total life of the nation.⁴⁸⁷ Samartha was implicitly saying that any religion and its doctrines which were brought by the colonialism must be re-rooted into the indigenous culture. Indigenous cultural context become a centre to examine what the true value is, instead of the centre in God. The human becomes a decision-maker to decide what the truth is and the standard for the human needs. God's authority had been displaced by the human's authority in the circle of inter-faith dialogue.

4.3.8 Misleading the Christians to turn to a 'Local Gospel'

In the Addis Ababa statement, as *Interim guidelines to dialogue*, is shown that dialogue itself has no single pattern. In different places or contexts it may ask for different methods. Especially in point nine of guidelines, the purposes of dialogue were emphasised more than the patterns:⁴⁸⁸

"...however, certain types of dialogue may be mentioned which will have different purposes.

- (i) Dialogue for the sake of common action in the service of men in pluralistic societies;
- (ii) Dialogue for the sake of better mutual understanding between people of living faiths and ideologies;
- (iii) Dialogue for the sake of indigenization of Christian faith in different cultures."

This statement was influenced by the tentative suggestion by Samartha, point five (a): "...these dialogues (pattern) may be different in different countries and social situations".

Because the purpose of dialogue is no longer related to God (Theo-centric) but to humanity (humanism), the Christians here could be misled to turn away from the biblical gospel, to another "gospel" which might be found in the local culture

⁴⁸⁷ Samartha 1991:48

⁴⁸⁸ Samartha 1971:50

or what the community wants to hear, but not what God want them to hear. This 'human freedom' is supported by point ten in the Addis Ababa statement: "Dialogue must take place in freedom. Each partner must be understood as he understands himself, and his freedom to be committed to his faith must be fully respected. Without this freedom to be committed, to be open, to witness, to change and to be changed, genuine dialogue is impossible."⁴⁸⁹

4.3.9 The all too human side of the historical Jesus

The Addis Ababa statement, points eleven to thirteen, is also supported by point six in Samartha's tentative suggestions: to emphasize the need to study each religion in the frame of dialogue with people of other faiths. This study, once again, means questioning and examining each religion for the sake of mutual understanding.

In the point eleven it was stated: The World council comprises various confessional heritages and a wide variety of convictions. Therefore it does not have one united view of dialogue with men of other faiths. The plurality of cultural situations as well as the varieties of cultural and historical heritages which Christians bring from their past play a significant role in the discussion among the churches on the nature and meaning of dialogue as well as on the experience and insights gained. The engagement of the World Council in dialogue is to be understood as a common adventure of the churches. There are number of issues that have already emerged and which need to be faced as dialogue continues. Among the questions that need to be studied are the following:

'What are the fundamental theological implications of dialogue? This requires us to struggle together as Christians with important questions such as: What is the meaning of the saving work of God in Christ and of the salvation offered to all men through his cross and resurrections? What is the relation of God's

⁴⁸⁹ Samartha 1971:51

salvation in Jesus Christ to his presence and activity in the whole world, and in particular in the lives and traditions of men of other faiths and ideologies?’⁴⁹⁰

This very biblical statement actually has no more meaning at all as significant theological foundation for dialogue, as it was obvious above, that for the sake of dialogue, the human traditions and the plurality of contexts must be the first to be considered instead of what Jesus had done. Did not Samartha always emphasize that Jesus became a man for all human, and his work on the cross offered automatically to all men. In other word, in Samartha’s liberal concept is that all men and women without a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, they already have that salvation. They only need to continue the good works for the human being (humanism) as the fruit of the presence of God in their life in the world according to their each religion and ideology.

The next point is about: *What is the relation between dialogue, mission and witness?*

Witnessing to the love of God in Christ is an obligation inherent in the Gospel. Dialogue for the sake of mutual understanding (9.b.ii) in particular loses its meaning unless we as Christians bear our witness to the salvation we receive in Jesus Christ. There is, however, acute difference among us and in our churches whether the emphasis on dialogue will blunt the cutting edge of this mission or whether the community of human and spiritual discourse created by dialogue will further it. Moreover, there is need while facing this difference among ourselves to be sensitive to the suspicion of our partners that dialogue is simply a new strategy for proselytization. We must pursue these unresolved questions in the light of insights gained through further theological study and through actual experience of dialogue.

In this point again is shown the uncertain position of the WCC: should they abandon the meaning of witnessing as part of their faith’s calling because of fear of suspicion from their partners about proselytization? To me, witnessing to

⁴⁹⁰ This paragraph is point 12 in the Addis Ababa Statement about *The theological foundation of dialogue*, and point 13 about *The relation between dialogue, mission and witness*.

the love of God in Christ is not proselytization. Christians in their witnessing to others, is not shelling the religion, but uplifting Jesus as The Son of God and the Saviour of the World. If someone afterward experiences the personal encounter with God, that is the work of The Holy Spirit (God), and no one can stop it. For this reason, the Bible teaches Christians to be more obedient to God, instead of being too mindful of people' suspicions.

4.3.10 Genuine Gospel or dangerous syncretism?

This is the last point from the Addis Ababa Interim Guidelines to dialogue, and the most controversial in the history of acceptance of the Inter-faith dialogue concept itself. Contextualization, it will now become clear, cannot be separated from 'indigenization'. Point fourteen from Addis Ababa provides the guidelines about '*How is dialogue to be understood and practiced in the context of indigenization?*'

The description was: Wherever the Church expresses its life in concrete forms it has to express the Gospel through certain cultural and intellectual forms. In the interplay between the elements of revelation and the aspects of a given culture there is the danger that the revelation may be submerged and compromised by these cultural elements. Nothing is gained by seeking to avoid this danger. New criteria have to be developed for judging what the responsible ways of expressing the Christian faith in different cultures. Enquiries should be made whether any light is to be thrown on this question by cultural anthropology, social psychology and the history of religions. Dialogue is necessary to enable Christians to find out both what are the authentic changes which the Gospel demands and the authentic embodiment which the Gospel offers. In the context of living in dialogue with men of other faiths and ideologies, Christians have the urgent task of expressing their faith in cultural forms that are transformed, redeemed and judged in the light of the Gospel.

Paul Tillich and Donald Mc.Gavrand provided theories on how the gospel can examine the cultures: the famous idea about 'in cultures, above cultures and against cultures'. Samartha is not so clear on exactly what theory he used to

approach the cultures in Asia. But if we carefully study his Indian hermeneutic to approach the Bible (to which the Addis Ababa statement is referring to), it will be understood how his concept can easily mislead Christians into syncretism. The Orthodox Churches sees the WCC as being syncretistic, so they decided to withdraw from this ecumenical institution.⁴⁹¹ This is no small ecumenical matter!

4.3.11 Dialogue without Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus?

In the closing part of the Addis Ababa guidelines to dialogue, the WCC committee of which Samartha served as Unit for Dialogue director, gave recommendations, from point fifteen to twenty.⁴⁹² These recommendations were only given as suggestion to all Christians to engage more in 'dialogue with people of other faiths' through all the opportunities they can find in the communities: to study each other's religion both bilaterally and multi-laterally. To this 'study', the Addis Ababa guidelines recommend the WCC as much as possible to sponsor each person who are interested in these dialogue meetings and, even more, to give scholarships for students doing overseas studies on 'Inter-faith dialogue'.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ Evers 1998:4

⁴⁹² Samartha (1971:53) wrote about Addis Ababa statement, point 15 and 16 ,as follows: "In the light of these observations the following recommendations are made, taking into account the limited resources of the World Council both in personnel and funds. And point 16. Member churches should be assisted to prepare groups of people able to engage in responsible dialogue with men of other faiths and ideologies in their particular countries or regions. Where this is already being done ways and means should be found of sharing the insights gained with other churches."

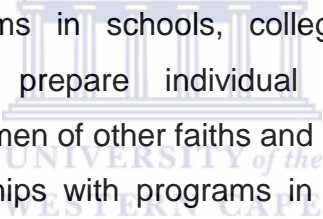
⁴⁹³ Samartha (1971:53) wrote on point 18 as follows: "The Ecumenical Institute in Bossey should be asked to hold courses and consultations from time to time for the preparation of people selected by the churches for such dialogue. Such people will help to provide a panel of resource persons for the World Council of Churches and member churches in dialogue with men of other faiths and ideologies. Full use should also be made of the regional facilities available in ecumenical study institutes and centres. Attention should also be given to collaboration with Roman Catholic Institutions which have the same concern for dialogue and relationship with men of other faiths and ideologies". And point 19. Consultations should be arranged, as regularly as possible, by the World Council, between Christians and men of other faiths to study a subject or subjects previously agreed upon by all concerned. These may be between Christians and members of one other faith or of a more multi-lateral nature.

At the present stage priority may be given to bilateral dialogues of a specific nature. Such consultations need to be organized also by the regional institutes or Councils and the experience gained shared by all. There should also be positive response to initiatives for dialogue from men of other faiths and ideologies.

20. (a) There should be selective participation in world religious meetings. Such participation should be based on mutual recognition of and respect for the integrity of each faith, the freedom to question the underlying assumption of any particular meeting and the avoidance of being

It was once again stressed that the participation in this dialogue should be based “on mutual recognition of and respect for the integrity of each faith, the freedom to question...” (See point 20). In other words, this organised dialogue with people of other faiths, to which Samartha dedicated his life, and towards which the WCC spent so many resources and energies in support, is not proclaiming the Christ to the lost. As David Bosch insisted, it has no mission at all, because the goal of mission is to proclaim Jesus as the Life, the Way and The Truth.⁴⁹⁴ The local churches are encouraged by the WCC to implement the dialogue program as much as possible, but not mission as in the example of the early Christian Churches’ mission.

Member Churches should consider what action they can take in the following educational areas:

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- (i) Teaching programs in schools, colleges and adult educational schemes which prepare individual Christians for a proper understanding of men of other faiths and ideologies.
 - (ii) Positive relationships with programs in university departments and other institutes of higher learning which are concerned with the academic study of religions.
 - (iii) The review of material used and teachings customarily given in courses of instruction at all levels in the churches, including at theological colleges and seminaries, with a view to eliminating anything which encourages fanaticism and an insensitive attitude to men of other faiths and ideologies.

involved in an alliance of religions against ideologies. The World Council should not officially be involved in the organizational structure of world inter-religious organizations.

(b) Information should be gathered about the different world religious organizations in order to assist in decisions concerning selective participation.

(c) Selection should be based on the following priorities: (i) meetings of one or more faiths called to grapple with major human problems such as justice, development and peace on regional or world-wide basis; (ii) participation in gathering which represent the broad streams of the life and thought of major faiths.

(d) When the World Council of Churches is sponsoring meetings on specific issues such as justice, education, the future of man etc., men of other faiths and ideologies can profitably be invited to cooperate. This cooperation will involve not only study but also common action on these issues.

⁴⁹⁴ John 14:6

- (iv) The provision of courses for members of churches who are to be sent to serve in countries other than their own so that they may be helped to live among men of other faiths.⁴⁹⁵

The Addis Ababa Statement (1971), as Interim Guide line to dialogue, was seemingly created to encourage Christians to study other religions besides Christianity, and to be open to accept the 'truth' from them. By that, Samartha and his fellows from WCC expected the Christian approach to other religion to be more positive, and avoid proselytism. In other words, in Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths, Samartha dismissed evangelism, because to him, evangelism smells of colonialism and proselytism, which is just dehumanising.

4.4 Conclusion

Most of the ecumenical scholars such as John Hick, Ariarajah, Hans Küng and Knitter are in agreement, even though they admit a small difference on details, with the idea of Samartha's concept of Inter-Faith Dialogue. John Hick, with his 'Copernican Revolution', stressed that Christians must have a transformation from a Christianity of Jesus- Centred, to a God-centred model of the universe of faiths. The centre of the religious universe is no longer the church, and no longer Jesus, but God. This concept is close to Samartha when he emphasised that the Christian approach toward people of other Faiths is no longer Christ centred (Christ-centric) but Theo-centric. In this concept, Hick sees Christianity as only one of many religions or traditions. There is nothing unique or special in Christianity to make it look 'absolute' and different from other religions. In the pluralist context, Christianity is not the one and only way of salvation, but one among several.

Ariarajah as an ex-student of Samartha, who later became his successor at the WCC -dialogue unit, sharpened Samartha's concept to become more universal.

⁴⁹⁵ Samartha 1971:53

He insisted that the same God is working in the different religions, and giving salvation to them as the same assurance to heaven as to Christianity. Christian dialogue with people of other Faiths is not so much about to resolve the immediate conflicts, but about 'building a community of conversation'. Christian mission is the European colonialist way of spreading Christianity and political expansion. This is no longer relevant and it must be rejected and even condemned in the collusion between religion and political power.

Ironically, from the Roman Catholic perspective Samartha's concept is not seen as a basis for Ariarajah's way to sharpen it. Hans Küng admitted that Inter-faith dialogue can be a solution for political tensions. But dialogue must be critical dialogue. We need a dialogue with give and take. We need a dialogue in mutual responsibility and in the awareness that none of us possesses the truth 'ready made', but are all on the way to the 'ever greater' truth. On the other hand, Knitter criticized Samartha's concept as relativistic pap in which 'many' means 'any'. To him, Samartha's concept of Interfaith Dialogue is just relativising all the truth for the sake of 'mutuality'. It means no one can make any evaluative judgment. In interfaith dialogue, according to Knitter, both sides in the conversation must really be talking and listening, a process in which both sides must really open themselves to learning and changing. Knitter, therefore, suggests adopting a hermeneutic of suspicion in maintaining dialogue on an interfaith basis. We must be ready to be suspicious of the traditional truth we had by learning and listening to other truths, and we should be ready to change by what we heard.

Samartha's tentative suggestions were found almost ninety percent in the guidelines and the policy of interfaith dialogue, proving that he was a leading figure in maintaining interfaith dialogue, and that is idea served as a main concept in the interfaith dialogue history. Unfortunately, the outcome of that concept is not as positive as the guideline itself, and neither as beautiful as what Samartha had dreamed of. The negative result of interfaith dialogue must alarm the churches to be more alert in employing interfaith dialogue.

Brewster quoted some participants about the validity of the concept of interfaith dialogue: “Do not throw out the baby with the bath. Because we can not agree with the WCC approaches or conclusions in dialogue encounters, it does not mean we can not dialogue. We do not have to be shaky with our faith if we have to listen to other quietly. Dialogue is threatening only if God is not in control”.⁴⁹⁶

For the Indonesian context, Samartha’s concept of interfaith dialogue is not as relevant as in other contexts, as already argued by e.g. David Bosch. Indonesia, besides its pluralist setup in religion, culture and traditions, has an ideology of ‘Pancasila’ (Five principles) which is functioning to embrace but also to filter all the diversities in the country. Interfaith dialogue must be measured by Pancasila. It means the mechanism of interfaith dialogue has to be shaped by Pancasila. The ideology of Pancasila is a catalyst for the people of different faiths to dialogue with each other, and the spiritual believes within each religion as catalyst for the people to relate to the God they worship in.

The more prominent ideas by David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin about Christian dialogue with people of other faiths are still relevant, in Indonesia and other parts of the world. To them, both ‘dialogue’ and ‘mission’ are faith commitments that go hand in hand, with respect for others; in both cases we are witnessing to our deepest convictions while listening to those of our neighbours. The difference of dialogue and mission is that dialogue’s goal is to encourage each participant into a deeper respect for each other in their common life; mission’s goal is to proclaim, without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. Bosch’s devotion here is also representing the evangelical views in the entire world including evangelical views in Indonesia.

⁴⁹⁶ Brewster 1979:523

CHAPTER 5

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY CONCEPT OF DIALOGUE FOR THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

Introduction

An important factor in applying Samartha's concept of dialogue in the Indonesian context is that pluralism in Indonesia is not the same as pluralism in India, which formed the background for Samartha to propose his concept of "Interfaith Dialogue". Even though both countries are part of the Asian context which served as a main inspiration for interfaith dialogue, it is crucial to be aware of differences amongst the Asian cultures in applying such dialogue.

This chapter will be specifically dealing with Indonesia's current situations, especially the way the government approaches issues such as 'democracy' and 'religious affairs', which in many ways shows a unique mix of plurality: politically, religiously, ethnically, tribally and in terms of culture.⁴⁹⁷ This plural context strongly affects the political situation and the relationship between people of different religions.

Besides this point, this chapter also shows how inter-faith dialogue had started in Indonesia, before WCC even had that issue on their agenda. Ironically, even though Indonesia has a national ideology of the so-called Five Principles or 'Pancasila',⁴⁹⁸ which is supposed to embrace these plural diversities, and to assure equal rights to all, in fact the Christian minority is still marginalised by the Muslim majority.⁴⁹⁹

It is with the view to such a complex context in Indonesia, that in the second part of this chapter some theoretical dialogue models will be proposed as

⁴⁹⁷ For the general election in 2009, 43 political parties were taking part.

⁴⁹⁸ On June 1st, 1945, Indonesia's first president, Soekarno proposed the Pancasila or Five Principles as Indonesia's national Ideology. The Five Principles came from the country's own greatly varied and multi-ethnic cultural roots. Cf. Gunadirdja 2005:32.

⁴⁹⁹ Arifianto 2009:85

'alternative missionary paradigm', while in the final part of this chapter, some practical suggestions for inter-faith dialogue, based on a Christian ethic in general and Indonesian common cultural elements in particular, which will hopefully be suitable to accommodate the pluralism in that country (without denying the Churches their missionary calling), will be suggested.

5.1 Contemporary Indonesia

When assessing the current situation in Indonesia, it is important to note the political changes which affected the national economy and socio-cultural realities (such as religion) in the period between 2000 and 2009. During this period, Indonesia has been governed by three different presidents, which is quite extra-ordinary, since constitutionally an elected president is supposed to be in office for five years, with the possibility of re-election for another term. The Indonesian current situation, which will be addressed here, is, first: the government's approach towards democracy; second: the handling of religious affairs, and third: practicalities of inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia.

5.1.1 A Brief survey of the Government's approach towards democracy

After the second president of Indonesia, Soeharto, stepped down under the pressure of the people's power in 1998, he was replaced by his deputy Baharuddin Habibi, (he is daily called 'Habibi')⁵⁰⁰, until 1999. During this short period of time, the political system in Indonesia was in transition from a military dictatorship to 'democracy'. The first democratic election was held at the end of 1999, where 'Abdurrahman Wahid ('Gus Dur') was elected to be the next president. Gus Dur was known as a strong leader of a significant Muslim group, called 'Nahdlatul Ulama' or NU. NU is one of the biggest Muslim organisations in Indonesia besides Muhammadiyah. Gus Dur's leadership unfortunately became controversial and created enormous instability, both economically and politically. For political and economical reasons, Megawati Soekarnoputeri, who was Vice President at that time, took over the government from Gus Dur for the period 2001 till 2004. Gunadirdja commented on this transition of power as the

best way to save the country. He wrote; “people believe that the transfer of the day-to-day administration from the President to the Vice President is the best way to save the country from an ongoing economic and political crisis”.⁵⁰¹

Under Megawati’s government, the economic growth slowly improved, even though the national stability was not yet fully established. In the eastern part of the country, religious tensions between Christians and Muslims still flared up. Thousands were killed and many were displaced; people fled from their own houses to other safer cities as refugees, or escaped into the forest.⁵⁰² In the western part of the Country there was also tension between separatists within the so called Aceh Freedom Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka), similar to events that also happened in Papua, in the eastern part of Indonesia⁵⁰³. During this sectarian tension, according to the human rights report, the destruction and damage were much bigger on the Christian side.⁵⁰⁴

After the period of Gus Dur and Megawati, the next elected president was Siswono Bambang Yudhoyono or (SBY), with his deputy Jusuf Kalla (2004-2009). Before the beginning of the new millennium in 2000 Indonesia was governed by military dictatorship under General Soeharto (1967-1998), but since then, the situation was changed to ‘democracy’, where the people within a multi-party system, could freely express their vote both for the parliament and to elect the President and Vice President. Yet, the unique features of this democracy have always been interpreted from a Muslim perspective, instead of the perspective of the ‘average citizen’ or ‘the people’ in general. The outcome of any decision to be made by the new government is perceived to be “by the

⁵⁰⁰ Habibi was known as a technocrat more than a politician.

⁵⁰¹ Gunadirdja 2000:3

⁵⁰² Novi Pinontoan (2002) from Ambon reported that at least 6,000 were killed, 28,000 units of houses were destroyed; 330,000 people were displaced; hundreds of school buildings, churches and mosque; three universities (one of them a Christian University - UKIM) and two hospitals were destroyed during the three years (1999-2002) of religious conflict in the Moluccas.

⁵⁰³ The foreign Ministers of the Asean Regional Forum Meeting in Bangkok, on 27 July 2000, supported the territorial integrity and national unity of Indonesia, including Aceh and Papua. Cf Gunadirdja (2000:17).

⁵⁰⁴ Rionaldo (2008) described in his Compass direct news as follows: “Under the administration of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who took power in October 2004, there have been 87 cases of closed or destroyed churches. That compares with 92 such cases during the rule of predecessor Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-2004), 232 cases under Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-

Muslim people, for the Muslim people". It is because according to them the majority in Indonesia are Muslims. It is important to face the fact that this is the 'style' of Democracy in Indonesia today.

The implementation of the so-called Joint Decree issued on September 13, 1969, by the ministers of Religious Affairs and of the Interior,⁵⁰⁵ was one of the evidences of 'new democracy'. The joint decree has threatened the position of Christians more than during the preceding years.⁵⁰⁶ Special attention needs to be given here to the Act, chapter 14, point 2 (in my own translation from Indonesian): 'The requirements to build a church, is that it must have at least 90 members from the area, who are proven by their own legal Identity card (ID). The permit must also be supported by at least 60 non-Christians from the same area, and the support must be signed by the municipality in the area. The other requirements are that the permit must also be signed by the Religious Affairs office in the city, with the written recommendation attached. To that still needs to be added that the recommendation from The Religious Peace Forum must also be attached.⁵⁰⁷ We know how the Indonesian bureaucracies work, yet this is the process that Indonesian Christians must be going through, waiting for the answer from some or other bureaucrat, not knowing when.

Strangely enough, the people in the area are normally immigrants from different suburbs or cities, who of course have a different address written in their ID. It is therefore almost impossible to get 90 Christians who have the proper ID and

2001), 156 cases under Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibii (1998-1999), and 456 under Soeharto (1967-1998)."

⁵⁰⁵ This Joint Decree promulgated restrictions for the Christians to build the churches in areas which were predominantly Muslim. These restrictive conditions have, for the past ten years (since 1972), hampered Christians in building their Churches, and have caused continuous friction between Muslims and Christians. Cf. Hardawiryana (1982:66)

⁵⁰⁶ This decree had been renewed on March 21st, 2006 with the new number: number 8 and 9, 2006 about the implementation of that decree by all premiers and their deputies within their task in each region (Peraturan bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri no 8 Tahun 2006 dan no 9 Tahun 2006 tentang pedoman Pelaksanaan Tugas Kepala Daerah/Wakil Kepala Daerah dalam Pemeliharaan Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Pemberdayaan Forum Kerukunan Umat beragama dan Pendirian Rumah Ibadat disahkan pada 21 Maret 2006). Cf. Jehani 2006:iii

⁵⁰⁷ "Selain memenuhi persyaratan administrative dan tekhnis,pendirian rumah ibadat harus memenuhi persyaratan khusus meliputi: a. daftar nama dan Kartu Tanda Penduduk pengguna rumah ibadat paling sedikit 90 (sembilan puluh) orang yang disahkan oleh pejabat setempat sesuai dengan tingkat batas wilayah sebagaimana dimaksud dalam pasal 13 ayat (3); b. dukungan masyarakat setempat paling sedikit 60(enam puluh) orang yang disahkan oleh

who are living in the same area together. It is not difficult to find 60 Muslims in the same area (as they are the majority), but it will be almost impossible to get a permit or support from them to build a church in the area, as they normally influence each other or are influenced by the local government themselves. This is another picture of democracy in Indonesia.

The discourse on the threat of Christianisation in Indonesia, according to Mujiburrahman, sometimes led several Muslims to violent action, including attacking church buildings and Christian schools. Moreover, he adds, the Muslims also demanded the Government to control and to restrict Christian missions by (1) making strict requirements for obtaining permission to erect a new place of worship; (2) restricting religious propagation; (3) controlling foreign aid for religious institutions; (4) prohibiting inter-religious marriage; (5) declaring that religious study at any school must be taught by a teacher who has the same religion as the students.⁵⁰⁸

All those points had been accommodated in the decree 70/78 by the Minister of Religion and in the Joint Decree (Nr 8 and 9, 2006) between the Minister of Interior and the minister of Religion. Interestingly, Mujiburrahman also disclosed what the Muslim leaders are busy demanding from government concerning Christians: that they in fact tried to intensify Islamic propagation (da'wah) programmes to compete against the Christian mission; they also developed the exclusive interpretations of religious doctrines, such as a total rejection of freedom to convert from Islam by reaffirming the classic Islamic doctrine on apostasy (an apostate could be killed, though it was noted that this could not be applied in a non-Islamic state like Indonesia); they were also prohibiting Muslims to participate in Christmas celebrations (because the Trinity could endanger Muslim monotheistic belief; prohibiting inter-religious marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims based on the idea that possible harm (if the Muslim partner converted to Christianity) should be prevented.⁵⁰⁹ Is this another form of Indonesian democracy?

lurah/kepala desa' c. rekomendasi tertulis kepala kantor department agama kabupaten/kota; dan d. rekomendasi tertulis FKUB kabupaten/kota." Cf. Jehani 2006:52.

⁵⁰⁸ Mujiburrahman 2006:300

⁵⁰⁹ Mujiburrahman 2006:300

The Indonesian Council of Churches' chairman, Yewangoe (2004-2009), states that the existence of these Decrees is not in the spirit of political reformation that the people of Indonesia and the government have been claiming and clamouring⁵¹⁰. He points out that the joint decree is not in line with the main State Constitution 'UUD 45', chapter 29, about religious freedom. This Decree has significantly marginalized Christians who are also citizens of Indonesia, and were also taking part in the freedom struggle, materially, morally and physically. He thus wishes to emphasize the 'equal right' of the people of Indonesia, irrespective of their religious and cultural backgrounds. He challenges that the government should exercise a positive leadership role, in line with the Constitution, instead of allowing themselves to be used by certain groups. He comments that the Joint decree is simply causing more harm and religious conflict among the people of Indonesia, that the State Constitution, 'UUD 45', should have preference and more influence than the Minister's Decree, and the commitment to UUD 45 is more important to balance the rights of the majority with those of the minorities, and without discriminating against any group.

Albert Simandjuntak, one of the contemporary Indonesian politicians voiced a similar idea. He insisted that UUD 45 as the Indonesian's State Constitution must function as a single resource and foundation for the whole framework for parliament and the government to exercise their power and right to govern the country.⁵¹¹ He means by that, that true democracy will only be established in Indonesia by submitting to the heart and soul of Panca Sila and State Constitution UUD 45, not by a majority or minority of religious people.

5.1.2 The Indonesian government's approach towards "Religious Affairs"

In order to find a suitable missionary paradigm for the Indonesian context today, it is important to take note of relevant aspects of the history of Christianity in

⁵¹⁰ 'Yewangoe mengutarakan (Ind.), keberadaan SKB tersebut tidak seiring dengan jiwa reformasi yang selama ini digaungkan masyarakat dan pemerintah'. (The joint decree by the Interior minister and Religious affair minister is not in the same line with Reformation spirit which both the people and the Indonesian government always exposed. Cf. Jeff (2005:18)

⁵¹¹ Translated from Simandjuntak (Ind): "Oleh UUD 45 ini, NKRI mempunyai Pemerintahan, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR), yang secara menyeluruh

that region, and the Indonesian government's approach towards religious affairs in general.

In colonial times missionary work was accompanied by the conviction that Western civilization, western models of Christianity and even Western humans, were superior to Asian ones. As a consequence, the congregations were kept under close supervision and church independence was postponed until the so-called nurturing process could successfully result in sufficient "Christian maturity."⁵¹²

Generally, the churches more or less followed Western liturgical, confessional, and theological patterns. There are hardly any theologians using Indonesian religious concepts in formulating an Indonesian Christian theology. However, on a personal level a magical-mythical vision of reality may strongly influence the way church members perceive and express their faith. Van den End compares the Christianity in Asia in contrast to Africa. He observed that some of the churches in Africa are consciously incorporating pre-Christian religious elements into Christian worship and practice.⁵¹³

Since independence in 1945, the Christians in Indonesia have been determined by their minority position in relation to the government and their Muslim neighbours. Athyal described the hardships of being Christian in contemporary Asia, as a position always associated in the Asian mind with colonialism. When Indonesian people become Christians they are looked upon as betraying their culture and denying their citizenship. Christianity carries the stigma of being a Western religion that came with the colonialists and should be gone with the colonialists.⁵¹⁴

On the political level, the churches do not have many options, except to compromise with the government policy. For daily matters the churches

merangkumi semua kekuasaan dalam menjalankan wujud pemerintahan di Negara ini" . Cf. Simandjuntak (2009:47)

⁵¹² Van den End, 2004:946

⁵¹³ Van den End, 2004:948

⁵¹⁴ Athyal, 1993:60

communicate with the government through the Ministry of Religion, which is always led by a Muslim. As a matter of fact, this Department takes care of many Muslim interests in the country; including maintaining the annual business of pilgrimage to Mecca, more than any other religions needs. The minorities, such as the Christians and other non-Muslims, are looked upon as second-class citizens. The majority of people in government support policies that tend to discriminate against minority groups, such as Christians.

In a neighbouring country such as Malaysia, you can not even have a house-church, let alone get permission to erect a church building. If your neighbours hear singing and other evidence of Christian activity, you are likely to be reported to the police.⁵¹⁵ In Indonesia the situation is similar.

Since the downfall of the Soeharto's regime in 1998, the relationship between Christians and Muslims became more difficult. Muslims have long considered Christianity as the religion of the Dutch colonizers, as a Western colonial religion. Muslims fear Christianisation among their youth, since Christianisation is seen by Muslims as equivalent to westernisation. Mujiburrahman described this as follows:

“In the Muslim discourse, Christianisation could also mean a political conspiracy of the Christians with other enemies of Islam, particularly the secularists, inside and outside the country, to weaken the Islamic group culturally, politically and economically. Christianisation was therefore described as a ‘new style of crusade’, ‘religious expansionism’, ‘foreign intervention,’ ‘arrogance of cultural superiority’ inherited from the west and ‘intolerant to Muslim feelings’.”⁵¹⁶ So therefore, they try to do as much as possible to restrict the Christians movement.

As a result of the Decree number 70, which was issued by the Religious Affairs minister in 1978, and the Joint Decree, by the Interior minister and the minister of Religious Affairs in 1969, as renewed in 2006, the Christians in their minority

⁵¹⁵ Athyal 1993:60

⁵¹⁶ Mujiburrahman 2006:300

situation, have more problems in getting permission for church building; while the Muslims in their majority position experience more leniency.

Another result was that the pupils in schools (both private and state schools) were no longer allowed to follow religious education that differed from the religious affiliation of their parents. In this way, the spreading of the gospel to non-Christian pupils was cut off. Christian mission in general was hampered by the government in many different ways because of the demand of the Muslim society at large. What Newbiggin observed in Asia, that missions can hardly claim to be respectable at the present time,⁵¹⁷ is also true of the situation in Indonesia. Christianity and Christian mission have always been seen as part and parcel of the pattern of colonialism. They were accused of not having Indonesian nationalism, but being foreigners and white religion's followers.⁵¹⁸

From 1996 onward Muslim extremist groups were not checked or prevented from attacking churches, if it suited the regime. In 1999, open war broke out between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas and in Central Sulawesi. Hundreds of church buildings, Christian schools and several mosques were destroyed.

In response to this chaos, some nationalists from mixed groups tried to intensify an inter-faith dialogue for the sake of peace in the nation, and tried to build up mutual understanding through initiatives such as 'Dialogue antar Iman' (DIAN), Interfidei, and the Institute for Inter-religious Dialogue⁵¹⁹, but the dialogue did not bear much fruit because, as Sumartana insisted, only a few Christians have adequate knowledge of Islam. The question that needs to be raised is whether dialogue in Indonesia failed because of the Christians' lack of knowledge of Islam? Or is that because dialogue itself has not yet found the right form and method for the Indonesian context? What about Muslim themselves: how many of them are really having a good understanding of Christianity? Do Muslims

⁵¹⁷ Newbiggin 1963:12

⁵¹⁸ Yewangoe 1996:290

⁵¹⁹ Van den End 2004:948

know how Christians understand their own faith? These questions need to be answered honestly if 'mutual understanding' is the goal of dialogue.

From the above picture about Indonesia today it should be clear that there are at least three main facts which need to be considered in designing a proper dialogical missionary paradigm in Indonesia: *Firstly*, the Democracy style in Indonesia is still partial, i.e. only in terms of the interest of the majority group instead of promoting true equality. Democracy has been understood from particular religious perspectives rather than on its own terms. For this reason, the acceptance of Pancasila and UUD 45 as main foundation of any ideology is very fundamental. *Secondly*, the 'Exclusivist Muslims' or 'Reformist' in Indonesia as Mujiburrahman mentioned, are seemingly more dominant than the nationalists, especially on the government level. *Thirdly*, Christianity will always be seen as a colonial influence and as a minority of strangers in their own country. Within this context, some constructive ideas of dialogue with people of other faiths (Interfaith dialogue) in Indonesia are being proposed in this study.

5.1.3 The past and the present Inter-faith Dialogue in Indonesia

a) "Limited Group"

As mentioned in chapter four, inter-faith dialogue had been held in Indonesia since 1969 by Mukti Ali before he was appointed to be a minister of Religious Affairs under Soeharto's regime. He was one of the members of 'Islam reformist',⁵²⁰ beside Ahmad Wahib, Djohan Effendi and Dawam Raharjo, and Nurcholis Majid. In the "Limited Group" meeting at Mukti Ali's house from 1967 to 1971, this group discussed 'the relationship between Islam and politics', which relates to political frustration in Indonesia. The discussion was 'if Islam should be maintained or not, as a political ideology to replace Pancasila in Indonesia?'⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ "Islam reformist" means the small group of Muslims students in late 1960s who declared the necessity of the renewal of Islamic thought. Mujiburrahman 2006:255.

⁵²¹ Mujiburrahman 2006:254

According to Mujiburrahman, in the discussion, some of them found that the ideological view of Islam was theologically and historically baseless and politically unpromising. In short, for them, Islam should not be an alternative to Pancasila.⁵²² In the dominant view of Islam at that time, Islam should replace Pancasila to become the Indonesian national ideology, so that Indonesia as a country will be ruled by Islamic law and as a Muslim state.

Nurcholis Majid, one of the members of the Limited Group then, in his speech delivered in Jakarta's cultural culture centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki, in 1972, said that "the root of the Muslim idea of the Islamic state were religious legalism and apologetics...the Muslim reference to Islam as a political ideology was nothing but an apologetic reaction to Western ideologies like socialism and nationalism".⁵²³ The Reformist group was then split, and the small group who followed the same line as Madjid, was then called 'the Islamic renewal Movement', or sometimes the 'non-ideological view of Islam'. Mukti Ali was one of them.

b) From 'Limited Group' to 'Inter-faith dialogue'

In the 'Limited Group' discussion, sometimes they also invited their Christian friends as observers. It must have been a horrible experience for the Christian non-participants, when they heard the discussions about 'the ideology of Pancasila to be replaced by the ideology of Islam'. Mukti Ali seemingly noticed this very sensitive atmosphere. In the same time (1969), he initiated dialogue sessions with his Christian friends (with among them Victor Tanja, a prominent Indonesian Protestant theologian). After informal discussion with his friends, they started the consultation on November 1969 at Catholic College in Jakarta. The participants were Mukti Ali himself, from the Muslim side, two Catholics and three Protestants. This was the first genuine inter-faith dialogue event in Indonesia. He said: "The initiative came from me, and after discussing the matter with my Christian friends the consultation has taken place."⁵²⁴ In this first

⁵²² Mujiburrahman 2006:254

⁵²³ Mujiburrahman 2006:255

⁵²⁴ Mukti Ali 1971:79

dialogue, Ali explains there was no special topic prepared to be discussed. The discussion was just flowing naturally and in a friendly atmosphere about any thing in their head.

c) The second inter-faith dialogue

After the first meeting they planned for the second meeting, with the leading discussion coming from Mukti Ali. They asked him to talk about any topic of his own choice. In the second inter-faith dialogue meeting, in December 1969, Mukti Ali talked about his opinion on the Vatican Council II. Ali wrote: "Some aspects of the decisions taken by the Vatican II were discussed, among others: the social aspect, the new attitude of the Vatican towards non-Christians, e.g. the Jews, the Muslims and others, the position of the pope, etc." ⁵²⁵

d) The third inter-faith dialogue

This Dialogue was held in January 1970 in Protestant College, in Jakarta. The participant from the Muslim side was still only Mukti Ali, with three participants from the Catholic and three from the Protestant side. The topic of discussion was 'mysticism' - what is the right attitude towards mysticism?

e) The Forth Dialogue

The forth dialogue was supposed to be held in March 1970 at Ali's house in Jakarta. ⁵²⁶ However, his meeting with Samartha from WCC a month earlier caused the forth dialogue to be delayed, because in the same time Ali had to attend the Ajaltoun meeting in Beirut, Lebanon. The Ajaltoun meeting was the first inter-faith dialogue of Christians with members of other faiths organised by WCC, especially with the Muslims from Indonesia (cf chapters 2 and 3).

In his own evaluation about inter-faith in Indonesia, Ali concluded in two points: *First*, that interfaith dialogue according to him is seemingly more fruitful if it was

⁵²⁵ Ali 1971:79 Cf. Friedli about the Vatican II, this thesis Chapter 4.1.4

⁵²⁶ Ali 1971:79

organised by teachers or other persons in private capacity than when it was organised by politicians or at a formal level, such as government. *Second*, that any missionary attitude towards Muslims clearly led to tension and conflict. He adds that inter-faith dialogue, especially between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia, was urgently needed, because it was unacceptable to Muslims when Christians equate them with pagans. He distinguished 'Christianity' from 'Christianization'. To him Christianization is the problematic and pathological form of Christianity in Indonesia. So therefore, he argued: "peace and justice could only be preserved if there reigned a notion of cooperation instead of competition, brotherhood instead of hostility, and trust in place of prejudice."⁵²⁷

Since the Ajaltoun meeting in 1970, Indonesia became one of the regular participants in inter-faith dialogue, organised by the WCC. In Indonesia itself, Inter-faith dialogue frequently took place, with increased levels of participation. Besides such dialogue organised at private levels, there were also inter-faith dialogue organised and supported by government, especially since Mukti Ali was appointed as Minister of Religious Affairs. During Mukti Ali's time in office, 1971-1976, more than 23 interfaith dialogues had been held in more than 20 cities in Indonesia, but Mukti Ali assessed that in general, the dialogue achievement was still far from what he expected, especially the repeated non-resolution of 'agreement to disagree'.⁵²⁸

As the head of many projects of inter-faith dialogue during Mukti Ali's period, Djohan Effendi admitted that the result was far from satisfying, but at least the project was somehow a good beginning to open the locked door of communication among the leaders of religious groups. Effendi actually wanted to proceed to a more serious dialogue in which sensitive theological issues could be discussed.⁵²⁹ He agreed that the minimal achievement of dialogue sponsored by the government was because of the simple expectation that the participants would enhance socio-political stability for the sake of development and that therefore the emphasis was much more on peaceful coexistence than

⁵²⁷ Ali 1971:80.

⁵²⁸ Mujiburrahman 2006:270.

⁵²⁹ Mujiburrahman 2006:272

on creating mutual understanding and cooperation among the religious groups.⁵³⁰ The inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia was intensified since the recurring tensions in the 1990s, up to the present day, between Muslims and Christians.

Learning from the past and the present inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia, three significant points emerge: First, the inter-faith dialogue has not reached its main goal (a deeper level of true understanding and respect of difference). Secondly, the inter-faith dialogue which focused on only common humanity such as social-political justice or stability, even though this was very important for the national development, was not enough to give the peace of mind for the human soul. Thirdly, something much deeper in the interfaith dialogue needed to emerge: real theological discussion on certain identified issues related to each religion. This is an outstanding need among the different religious people; although the result might eventually also in this case be only the famous "agreement to disagree".⁵³¹

5.2 Missionary views which can contribute to a new paradigm for Indonesia

Within the current Indonesian context, the alternative missionary paradigms suggested by Samartha, and other contemporary scholars like John Hick, Paul Knitter, David Bosch, and others, will be tested. Those theologians were chosen in this study because they are also prominent figures, besides Samartha from Asia, in the debates of interfaith dialogue. The crucial question will be: how are these paradigms relevant to the Indonesian context and how can they be accommodated in Indonesia with ninety percent of the population being Muslim?⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Mujiburrahman 2006:272

⁵³¹ Cf. Mujiburrahman 2006:270-272.

⁵³² In 2008, Indonesian population was 230 million. Cf. Simandjuntak 2009:59

5.2.1 The Indonesian Ideology of 'Pancasila' as basis for Inter-Faith Dialogue

In the discussion with some of the Indonesian politicians and theologians such as Simatupang, Eka Darmaputera, Yewangoe and Simandjuntak, regarding Inter-Faith Dialogue in the Indonesian context today, 'Pancasila' and 'UUD 45' must be accepted and recognized as the only foundation for any action or programs planned for rebuilding the community.⁵³³ Simandjuntak called the five principles of Panca Sila the five 'Super power life doctrines'. In addition, he insisted that for pluralism in Indonesia, Pancasila will be the best ideology to embrace all diversities and to foster unity in the nation. For all Indonesians who live in Indonesia, Pancasila and UUD 45 together (the philosophy of the Five Principles and its implementation through the Constitution) ensure the equal rights and the obligation of all her citizens to trust each other in living together.⁵³⁴

Indonesian national history lives from a vision focused on a nation united by Pancasila and UUD 45. Hardawiryana explained that this means that Indonesia is not a monarchy or a religious state; neither a secular country nor a mere federation. He goes further, within Pancasila and UUD 45, Indonesia is seen as a country which is based on the people's power, not on communism, nor capitalism or religion; it is a country with unity in its diversity; togetherness in its plurality; it is against tyranny toward the minority and it opposes dominance by the majority.⁵³⁵

In Pancasila and UUD 45, he asserted, the equal rights of five great religions are recognized by the government and officially given equal status and rights in practicing and propagating their faiths.⁵³⁶ [In reality, predominant Islam is clearly given certain privileges, as we have argued.] The Indonesian Christian politician, Simatupang, and his colleague Darmaputera (a theologian) believe that commitment to Pancasila will help Indonesian Christians to refresh their

⁵³³ Hardawiryana 1982:61 Cf. Gunadirdja (2005:32) and 'Indonesian ecumenical voices' (chapter 4.1.1)

⁵³⁴ Simandjuntak 2009:66

⁵³⁵ Hardawiryana 1982:61

⁵³⁶ Since 2000 this has become six religions; cf. Hardawiryana 1982:61

Christian faith in the modern world. They conceded that Pancasila's principles are not against the Biblical principles, but it supports the Christian faith to grow in the modern world together with other religions.⁵³⁷

In Indonesia, particularly during the period 1984-1985, all churches (in fact all religious organisations) had to insert a formula, to recognise Pancasila as sole foundation for the life of the nation into their church order or statutes. Under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid as President of the Muslim Party which he used to lead, the party Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) also accepted the Pancasila State and favoured religious tolerance, even before he became President of Indonesia (1999-2002), yet, on the other hand, the Reformist Islam continued to advocate Islamization of the state.

Before the year 2000, under Soeharto's regime, there was a national program by the government to promote 'Pancasila and UUD 45' as part of the process of national moral regeneration. This program was run by trained people from the government, who targeted the grassroots levels, including all educational institutions, from primary schools up to universities. Through this program, a uniform national perspective towards 'Pancasila and UUD 45' was promoted and expected. Unfortunately, certain Islamic groups did not like this program. They still preferred to find ways to change the country to become a totally religious state instead of one based on the principles of Pancasila.⁵³⁸ To these groups, religiosity is more important than national identity. This resentment drove a 'civil war' by some Muslim groups toward Christians in the eastern part of Indonesia, during the period 2000-2004. The number of people killed from both side (Muslims and Christians) is not clear till now.

Indonesian Council of Churches' chairman, Yewangoe, related Pancasila with the role of Christians in the community and challenged the Church to give herself to others; he further said that the Churches have the task to be concerned and to take care of the human problems in Indonesia. In the context of the national disaster in the wake of the tsunami in Indonesia, in 2004, he

⁵³⁷ Cf. Siwu 1996:240

⁵³⁸ Cf. Mujiburrahman 2006:274

encouraged the churches to serve the tsunami victims by giving them what they need and to help them out of the extremely bad social situations. This is the good news which brings freedom to humankind, to release them from the daily social problems. Christians were not called to persuade any one to be a Christian or come to church, but to serve the others who are not in the church.⁵³⁹

Even though Yewangoe did not explicitly mention Samartha's theory of dialogue in his article,⁵⁴⁰ he did emphasise about 'the Asian Christian views on suffering', that God is taking side with the people who are suffering, in line with Samartha's concept of theology of religion, 'that God is present in all religions', and that evangelism is the same as colonialism that dehumanises the human being.⁵⁴¹ In his appraisal of Samartha, he stated that Samartha was a productive thinker who was interested not only in theological, but also historical and philosophical problems, and who paid much attention to western thinkers as well as Indian philosophers. He added that Samartha was trying to dialogue with the two ideas, and to come to his own interpretation of Christ within the Indian context.⁵⁴² Yewangoe also seems to agree to what Simatupang had asserted three decades before, that the Indonesian Christians in their tasks had to be more *positive, creative, critical and realistic*.⁵⁴³

In view of such an understanding of the essence and the role of religion towards a more comprehensive sense of humanness, the dialogue process in Indonesia needs a deeper understanding of Christianity and other religions, besides merely promoting only Pancasila for the upliftment and acceptance of all people

⁵³⁹ Yewangoe 2008

⁵⁴⁰ His article on the website "Pelayan gereja bagi orang lain" (The Church servant for other people) was quoted from his doctoral dissertation "Theologia Crucis in Asia: Asian Christian Views on Suffering in the Face of Overwhelming Poverty and Multifaceted Religiosity in Asia" which he finished September 1987. It was published in Indonesia with the title "Theologia Crucis di Asia."

⁵⁴¹ Samartha 1996:194-201 Cf. Samartha (1991:2)

⁵⁴² Yewangoe 2009

⁵⁴³ These four words were described more clearly in the 10th Assembly of Indonesian Council of Churches (1984): positive means that the Christians are more open for something good from others, creative means that by the power of The Holy Spirit, the Christians replace the old concepts with the new ones, or adding something new to the old one; critical means to understand all things in the light of the Word of God, and realistic means to acknowledge the limits of time and the human being' Yewangoe 1996:294; cf. Simatupang 1967:11.

and greater tolerance between all the people in the country. The Christians need to know and to understand deeply why so many Muslims have feelings of dislike and resentment towards Christianity, both historically and practically. On the other hand, the Muslims need to know and to understand why Christians have such a strong conviction of the deity of Jesus and why they experience such difficulty to accept the legacy of Muhammad as a prophet, on par with biblical prophets. On this level, both sides need the spiritual maturity and readiness to listen and to understand without confrontation.

5.2.2 Samartha's sensitivity and his view of 'Openness and Commitment'

Several authors gave high recognition for Samartha's work during his involvement in the WCC. His sensitivity to his own Indian context and to ecumenical developments in his search for a relevant model of theology brought his name to a very significant level in the WCC history. Koyama characterises him as 'a faithful and wise son of the great Indian spiritual tradition', because of his vision of the Mystery of Truth.⁵⁴⁴ Devadhar praises Samartha's role in inter-religious encounters and describe it as 'creative leadership on the local, national, and international levels'.⁵⁴⁵ Several people like Wesley Ariarajah, D.C. Mulder, Kenneth Cracknel and Paul Knitter called him the architect or pioneer of inter-religious dialogue in the WCC.⁵⁴⁶

In commenting on Samartha's work, Mulder from the WCC expressed admiration for Samartha's wisdom and dedication in promoting dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths. He believed that Samartha is leaving a challenging legacy for the future of dialogue by his compassion about the importance of sharing religious experiences.⁵⁴⁷ Referring to his faithfulness as a Presbyterian of the church of south India, and also as a Christian theologian, Jongeneel called him 'a servant of dialogue'.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴Klootwijk 1992:317; cf. Koyama in David F. Ford 1989:221

⁵⁴⁵Klootwijk 1992:316; cf. Devadhar 1987:223

⁵⁴⁶Klootwijk1992: 316-317; cf. Mulder 1998:225

⁵⁴⁷ Klootwijk 1992:316; cf. Mulder 1982

⁵⁴⁸ Klootwijk 1992:317; cf. Jongeneel 1986:16

Studying the writings of Devanandan and Samartha, Jayakiran Sebastian then concluded that both have contributed enormously to responsible thinking and action with regards to the role of people of different religions and ideologies in the specific Indian context.⁵⁴⁹ This however also means that what Samartha had produced and spread through the WCC, was not automatically relevant in other contexts, such as in Indonesia. But at least, what he did throughout the Indian context by using the WCC as his vehicle: his sensitivity towards his context, his *openness and his commitment*, can be used to inspire other countries in Asia, especially in the multi-racial and multi-religious contexts such as in Indonesia, to find out the right model of Inter-Faith dialogue in that country.

In the Indian context, Samartha was dealing specifically with Hinduism and its polytheism, more than with the other big monotheist religions such as Islam. Samartha in his pluralist approach towards Hinduism adopted all its symbols and justified them with some scriptures from the Bible. While it may be possible to hide or obscure the problem of polytheism in dialogue with an inherently polytheist tradition or culture such as Hinduism, this problem can not be hidden or dealt with in the same way in conversation with a monotheist culture such as Islam. Islam is one of the 'monotheisms' similar to Christianity and Judaism, and it is an important factor in dialogue that both Christianity and Islam reject 'syncretism', unlike in Hinduism. The doctrinal tensions between these two religions are mainly about 'the legacy of the prophethood' of Muhammad for Christians, and 'the deity of Jesus Christ and His redeeming works' for Muslims. The other minor issues such as details of social ethics are not causing major problems in general. In addition, the national problem in Indonesia is not mainly related to doctrinal issues, but fear of 'Christianisation and Islamisation', both of which have become a political issue.

Anton G. Hönig, one of the retired Dutch missiologists, had been questioning Samartha's concept of dialogue. He asked whether Samartha sufficiently reckoned with the demonic power in religions; how readily do people really respond positively to God's revelation; what does Samartha do with the urgency

⁵⁴⁹ Klootwijk 1992:317; cf. Sebastian 1988:24

of the missionary call of witnessing to Jesus Christ as the Light of the World? ⁵⁵⁰
These questions also need to be raised in respect to the Indonesian context. In fact, Samartha himself, in the same way as John Hick and his Indian fellow R. Panikkar, seriously questioned the finality and the definitive normativity of Christ and of Christianity. ⁵⁵¹

Apart of the strengths and weaknesses of Samartha's theory of interfaith dialogue which Klootwijk already dealt with in some details, for the Indonesian context nevertheless, what is needed, is the sensitivity of Christians to realise that the missionary approach toward our Muslim neighbours today need to be changed significantly without compromising the principal elements of Christianity itself. Indonesian Christians need to be more sensitive of social common concerns, such as justice, poverty and corruption, but also more open to learn about and to understand other religions in Indonesia, especially Islam, without losing their deep commitment to be faithful to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Indeed, Simatupang is correct when he says: Indonesian Christians need to be more positive, creative, and critical, but also realistic. ⁵⁵²

Bonar Nababan, one of the Indonesian theologians and a Christian leader wrote about *mission in dialogue*. He agrees that Christians and Muslims must work together with sensitivity in the struggle for human rights, justice and corruption in Indonesia. He also insisted that in the Indonesian pluralist context, dialogue must be started from what we together can agree on, what we together need and what we together believe. He goes further by stating that interfaith dialogue can not be started from our diversities, but also as Jesus followers, that the Christians can not loose their final goal to show that Jesus is the redeemer of sins. He concluded that Christian mission in dialogue with people of other faiths must not bring 'a new God, but bring a new knowledge about God'. ⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ Hönig 1988:39; cf. Klootwijk 1992:318

⁵⁵¹ Bosch 1991: 482

⁵⁵² Simatupang 1967:34

⁵⁵³ Nababan 2006:57-58

5.2.3 John Hick's view of 'Theo-centrism'

John Hick developed his view from two contradictive books by Ernst Troeltsch, one of *The Absoluteness of Christianity* (1901), and the other one on *the relative absoluteness*, written before he died. Unfortunately, this book was not yet completed when he died in 1923. In his second book he criticised his first book; he now emphasized that 'Christianity is absolute for Christians' and the other world faiths are likewise 'absolute' for their own adherents.⁵⁵⁴ Hick then criticised the church's historical doctrine 'that outside Christianity there is no salvation'. According to him, this exclusive concept was the Protestant version of the Roman Catholic heritage and doctrine of 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus', which expressed a Christian monopoly of salvific truth and life: "Outside the Church there is no salvation". This was also the reason why Protestant churches sent missionaries: to save souls who otherwise had to face eternal damnation.

He challenged the received wisdom by saying that 'the picture would be very different, if Christianity with its claim to absolute truth and unique validity had shown a unique capacity to transform human nature for the better'. However, Hick showed that Christianity was indeed no different from other religions who justify violent aggression, exploitation and intolerance for the sake of their absolutism. He points that this was especially true of the prophetic faiths, Christianity and Islam.⁵⁵⁵

Hick could not but see all the destruction caused by Christians from Europe and North American in world history; all the negativity occurring in those histories, such as oppression, racism and exploitation. The superiority feeling of Western Christians sanctified Western imperialistic exploitation and thus created the other world, the "inferiority complex world", which inevitably became known as "the third world". He conceded that those people who were dominated by the

⁵⁵⁴ Hick 1987:16

⁵⁵⁵ Hick 1987:17

western Christian culture were categorised as black and brown humanity, as inferior cultures, including their religions.⁵⁵⁶

Since the second Vatican Council (1963-1965) rectified the Catholic doctrine regarding other religions (moving from a position of “outside the church there is no salvation” to a position of “there is salvation outside the visible church”), Hick understood this new paradigm as a right time for Christians to be transformed in their understanding of God’s relation to other religions. He suggested that Christians had to move from being and thinking Christ-centred to being and thinking God- or Theo-centred.

M.M. Thomas, one of the Indian theologian who also became a leading figure in the history of WCC, explained in his book *Risking Christ for Christ’s sake* about the the-centeredness in Hick’s theology. He insisted that Hick distinguishes between what he calls a ‘purely confessional dialogue in which each partner witnesses to his own faith convinced that his has absolute truth’ and a ‘truth seeking dialogue in which each is conscious that the Transcendent Being is infinitely greater than his own limited vision of it and in which they accordingly seek to share their visions’.⁵⁵⁷ According to Hick, Christianity had to move emphatically ‘from the confessional to the truth-seeking stance in dialogue’. This move was called in his own famous term a ‘*Copernican revolution*’: a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is God who is the centre, and that all the religions of humankind, including our own, serve and revolve around Him.⁵⁵⁸

Through his idea of Theo-centrism, Hick wanted to emphasise that the openness to God in inter-religious relations requires that Christians do not start with a Christian faith commitment to the centrality of God’s revelation in Christ, but that they must start from God as centre of the universe of faiths, where all religions can meet around Him. It also means that the redemption bought by the

⁵⁵⁶ Hick 1987:19

⁵⁵⁷ Thomas 1987:5

⁵⁵⁸ Thomas 1987:5

blood of Christ is offered to all human beings by God even without their formal entry into the church.

The implication of the Vatican II doctrine of Christ's redemption is that all this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all human beings, and since the ultimate vocation of 'man' is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to God, offers to every person the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.⁵⁵⁹

As a criticism to any form of Christian superiority, Hick concluded that we as Christians have no good grounds for maintaining that Christianity has produced or is producing more saints, in proportion to population, or a higher quality of saintliness than any other of the great streams of religious life. Hick only acknowledges Christianity as being the first of the world religions to have been to a great extent transformed by modernity.⁵⁶⁰

Learning from Church history, that Christianity was spread through colonialism and violence, and was deeply implicated in the First and the Second World War, Hick concluded that the missionary work, replacing the non-Christian traditions and planting in their stead in the soil of heathen national life the evangelical faith and the Christian life, is no longer absolute. The connection between Christian absolutism and the historical evils of world wars and colonialism is not one of logical necessity but is a factual link via a 'fallen' human nature which also made Christianity in many instances powerless to redeem.⁵⁶¹ In other words, Hick wants to say that Christianity is not better than other religions to improve people's lives or the individual human being, and the fall into the sin of world wars and colonialism underlines the fact that Christianity is no longer capable to preach Jesus Christ as only Redeemer and Saviour.

⁵⁵⁹ Hick 1987:21

⁵⁶⁰ Hick 1987:28

⁵⁶¹ Hick 1987:17

John Hick's view about forgiveness is not centralized on Jesus' death on the cross, but on the person who comes back to God. He based his concept on the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20, 24). His comment on this passage is that the father in the parable did not require a blood sacrifice to appease his sense of justice. As soon as he saw his son coming back (returning), the father just had compassion, he ran and fell on his neck. He kissed his son to welcome him. In the Lord's Prayer, he also said that the only condition for God's forgiveness is that we also forgive one another. He goes further that in the parable and the Lord's Prayer there was no hint of the idea that God can forgive sinners only because Jesus had bore our just punishment by his death on the cross, or by that death had satisfied the divine justice. A forgiveness that has to be bought by full payment of the moral debt is not in fact forgiveness at all. But Jesus did speak of the authentic miracle of forgiveness, a miracle not captured in the standard atonement theories.⁵⁶²

What the pluralistic vision accordingly requires, is not a radical departure from the diverse and ever growing Christian tradition, but its further development in ways suggested by the discovery of God's presence and saving activity within other streams of human life. The resulting perception is that Christianity is not the one and only way of salvation, but one among several.⁵⁶³ Openness to the wider religious life of humankind with its rich plurality of ways - female as well as male - of symbolizing the divine, can help to free us from the grip of an absolutised Christian patriarchalism.

Hick on this matter, similar to Samartha, uses the term 'God' to refer to the ultimate Reality to which the great religious traditions constitute different responses.⁵⁶⁴ Both Samartha and Hick emphasised the need of Christian's openness towards other religions, because both of them see the Christians must move further from confession of Christ-centred to God-centred, and the acceptance of the fact that Christians, just like people of other faiths, are on a pilgrimage in searching of the truth.

⁵⁶² Hick 1987:33

⁵⁶³ Hick 1987:33

⁵⁶⁴ Hick 1987:34

In this context, we can acknowledge elements of truth in John Hick's 'Copernican revolution': that the Christians must have a radical transformation from the exclusive confession of Christ to the wider conception of God of the universe. The problem with Hick's concept here is, however, that if the Christian must move away from her Christ-centred (exclusive) confession to only a God-centred one, for the sake of knowing the universe of faith (the conception of the God of the universe), the danger is that the incarnation of Christ and his work on the cross had no more purpose, and Christianity becomes an empty story.

This is not the 'openness' we expected to be promoted in Indonesia for maintaining the right model of dialogue between Christians with people of other religions, especially with Muslims, but merely the openness to learn other religions, and the openness to accept or to dialogue with people of other faiths (in this case with Indonesian Muslims) for mutual understanding. And yet, Hick is adamant to view colonial history, as a Christian activity, as only totally wrong. However, we should remember that Christianity is not the same as a Christian. The first is the belief system or religion, and the second is the person; the person who also can not be generalised as simply bad or good.

To see "God" as the centre of communication in dialogue with Muslims in Indonesia, as suggested by Hick's theocentrism, can be used as starting point, but it will not be possible to stop there. Christ as the visible God who became incarnate to be a ransom for the sinners must be addressed to anybody, no matter whether they accept it or not.

That is true that Christianity is not the only way of salvation, but Christ alone is "the Truth, the Way". Many people might not agree, or will reject it as the truth, but no one can change the Truth that Jesus declared about Himself. On the other hand, my openness to study Islam, and to accept the good moral teaching in it, does not have to replace my own conviction that Jesus Christ from Nazareth is the only one who ever died for my sin, and gives me the assurance of the life to come.⁵⁶⁵

5.2.4 David Bosch's view of 'Transforming Mission'

David Bosch is one of the Christian scholars in South Africa, who has been very consistent in dealing with other religions in his missionary approach. His book *Transforming Mission* is one of the most significant contributions in Christian theology of the 20th century. Bosch insisted (quoting Moltmann) that Christian theology needs dialogue for its own sake.⁵⁶⁶ For Bosch, Christian theology is a theology of dialogue. He adds that one way traffic or monological travel towards other religions is no longer relevant. However, on the other hand, true dialogue does not imply sacrificing one's own position. He argued "without my commitment to the gospel, dialogue becomes a mere chatter; without the authentic presence of the neighbour it becomes arrogant and worthless."⁵⁶⁷

David Bosch emphasised thirteen elements, contributing to a new missionary paradigm, calling them 'elements of emerging ecumenical missionary paradigms'.⁵⁶⁸ In this thesis six of these emerging paradigms, which I think are directly related to the main purpose of this thesis, will be discussed: mission as *missio Dei*; as evangelism; as contextualisation; as inculturalization; as common witness; and mission as witness to people of other living faiths.

Firstly: '*mission as missio Dei*'. It means that mission is God's mission or God's activity. Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. Mission is seen as a movement from God to the world, and the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. The concept of '*missio Dei*' here is not the same as Hoekendijk's version of the concept as explored at the WCC assembly in Willingen (1952). Hoekendijk understood this term as indicating God's presence in world history, and in each culture and religion,⁵⁶⁹ while '*missio Dei*' in Bosch's perspective is not separated from 'Jesus Christ as the Word become Flesh'.

⁵⁶⁵ Ephesians 1:13-14 : "...the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance..." (NIV)

⁵⁶⁶ Moltmann 1975:12f

⁵⁶⁷ Bosch 1991:483-484; cf. Wingate 1986:65

⁵⁶⁸ Bosch 1991:368

⁵⁶⁹ Siwu 1996:52-53; cf. Bosch 2006:180

Secondly: '*mission as evangelism*. It means that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed in the light of particular conditions and context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives; a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; to be set free and embracing Christ as Saviour and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ.⁵⁷⁰

In this paradigm is clear that mission is not the same as evangelism, but that they intimately interrelate to each other. Samartha of course did not agree with evangelism, which Bosch related to mission as a crucial aspect thereof. To Samartha, evangelism just smells of colonialism and dehumanisation.⁵⁷¹ Bosch stated that mission and evangelism are not synonyms but, nevertheless, indissolubly linked together and inextricably interwoven in theology and praxis. He agrees with Moltmann and Geffre, that mission is wider than evangelism. He insisted that evangelisation is mission, but mission is not merely evangelisation.⁵⁷² Mission is broader than evangelism, because mission is the totality of God's activities in saving the world, and evangelism is a total task of the church in response to God's mission into the world, to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal and to liberate.

Thirdly: '*mission as contextualization*'. He means that the missionary message of the Christian church incarnated itself in the life and the world of those who had embraced it.⁵⁷³ This paradigm affirms that God has turned toward the world. So therefore, the historical world situation ought to be incorporated as a constitutive element into our understanding of mission, its aim and its organisation.⁵⁷⁴ Jesus' mission as reflected in the Gospels does not portray Him as searing off into heavenly heights but immersing himself into the altogether

⁵⁷⁰ Bosch 1991:420

⁵⁷¹ Samartha 1991:149; cf. Ariarajah 1999:101 and Klootwijk 1992:332

⁵⁷² Bosch 1991:411-412; cf. Moltmann 1977:10 and Geffre 1982:478

⁵⁷³ Bosch 1991:421

⁵⁷⁴ Bosch 1991:426

real circumstances of the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed. “Like its Lord, the church in mission must take sides, for life and against death, for justice and against oppression”.⁵⁷⁵

In relation to theology, Bosch goes further by saying that we need an experimental theology in which an ongoing dialogue is taking place between text and context, a theology which, in the nature of the case, remains provisional and hypothetical.⁵⁷⁶

Forthly: *‘mission as inculturation*. It means that Christian mission must be translated in to a particular culture. “Inculturation is one of the patterns in which the pluriform character of contemporary Christianity manifest itself”.⁵⁷⁷ If the first model of contextualisation was focused *on social needs*, and the second model was *social liberation from western domination*, inculturation is focused on *social local custom*. The missionary must not force people to change their customs, as long as these were not opposed to religion (Christianity) or morality.⁵⁷⁸ This model was developed by most of the Evangelical theologians, such as Ralph Winter and his fellow Americans. I prefer to speak here rather of ‘the biblical view’ as the standard for changing of customs instead of (Christian) ‘religion’ or ‘morality’.

The fifth: *‘mission as common witness’*. It means that in mission, the churches (believers) must work together without promoting denominations, but as united as body of Christ in fellowship and witness of Jesus Christ. Bosch elaborated this paradigm as background for the International Missionary Council (IMC) as the first ecumenical movement, which then later integrated into the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the combined assembly in New Delhi, India (1961), on the basis of the acknowledgement that mission and unity belong together (see chapter 2 of this thesis). With this integration, it does not mean that the missionary task is less central to the life of the church than the pursuit

⁵⁷⁵ Bosch 1991:426

⁵⁷⁶ Bosch 1991:427; cf. Rütli (1972:244-249)

⁵⁷⁷ Bosch 1991:447

⁵⁷⁸ Bosch 1991:449

of renewal and unity. 'The common calling' was understood to refer to 'confess' or 'common witness'.⁵⁷⁹

The most important paradigm from David Bosch, and most relevant to this thesis is '*mission as witness to people of other living faiths*'. Bosch here points to the relationship between ecumenism and the theology of religions. He described that historically the Christian approach to witness to other religions is divided in three ways: *exclusivism, fulfilment, and relativism*.⁵⁸⁰ The Western approach was mostly *exclusivist (triumphalist)*, where Christianity was seen as the only absolute truth, which can only be proclaimed and was the only guarantee for salvation, while the others are cults and must be crushed.

This belief created tensions and war between Christianity and Islam in past centuries, during the so called *crusades*. The effects of this old view are still evidence in the unhealed wounds between Christians and Muslims. The other approach is *fulfilment*, where Christians believe that Christianity is the fulfilment of other religions. The Christians in witness to people of other religions are only needed to do some comparative religions to help them for adaptation, accommodation and maybe implementing indigenisation.⁵⁸¹ The exclusivist and fulfilment approaches can be classified as pre-modern and modern respectively, according to Bosch.⁵⁸²

The last approach is called *relativism*, where religions are seen as just the same. They only have different names, but all religions are referring to one and the same reality (if there is such reality). In this relativism, there is no such thing as absolute and normative reality. Bosch mentioned some theologians in this category, such as John Hick, Knitter, Panikkar and *Stanley Samartha*. (*the last obviously being the focus of this study*). Those theologians are clearly and seriously questioning the finality and the definitive normativity of Christ and of Christianity.⁵⁸³ "Relativists understand pluralism as a corollary of religious

⁵⁷⁹ Bosch 1991:460

⁵⁸⁰ Bosch 1991:478

⁵⁸¹ Bosch 1991:479

⁵⁸² Bosch 1991:481

⁵⁸³ Bosch 1991:482

liberty: everyone should have the right to choose whatever they want without arguing or trying to persuade others. Relativism does not deny the differences between religions, but it relativises their ultimate significance⁵⁸⁴ Samartha himself did not admit that he is actually 'a relativist' but saw himself as 'a pluralist'. According to him, a relativist attitude is not convincing. He sees it as 'a very shallow approach to questions of fundamental importance in human life'.⁵⁸⁵

In relation to *mission and dialogue*, Bosch did not explicitly reject the above three responses (in relation to modernity) towards other faiths. He asserted that we (Christians) are in need of a theology of religions characterised by creative tension, which reaches beyond the sterile alternative between a comfortable claim to absoluteness and arbitrary pluralism.⁵⁸⁶ He adds "the various models seem to leave no room for embracing the abiding paradox of asserting both ultimate commitment to one's own religion and genuine openness to another's, of constantly vacillating between certainty and doubt. Each time in all these approaches – the tension snaps".⁵⁸⁷

What Bosch wanted to address here is that in Christian dialogue with people of other faiths, 'paradox' and 'tension' can not be avoided, but this tension must be turned into a 'creative tension'. I assume this 'creative tension' is what resulted in Mukti Ali's notion of 'agreement to disagree'.⁵⁸⁸

Under the heading of 'creative tension', Bosch explained that the relationship between mission and dialogue can be viewed under several perspectives. The first is called 'the meeting of hearts rather than of minds'. It means that both mission and dialogue manifest themselves in a meeting of hearts rather than of minds. To have dialogue is already a decision of the heart rather than the intellect. Every party must accept the coexistence of different faiths and to do so not grudgingly but willingly, above all, he concluded, because we are dealing

⁵⁸⁴ Klootwijk 1992:83

⁵⁸⁵ Samartha 1981:24; cf. Klootwijk 1992:83

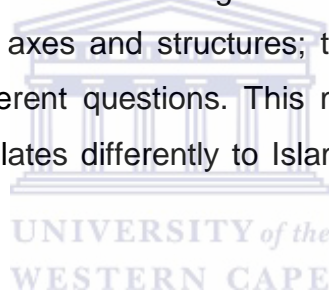
⁵⁸⁶ Bosch 1991: 483

⁵⁸⁷ Bosch 1991:483

⁵⁸⁸ Ali 1971:79

with a mystery.⁵⁸⁹ He agrees that Christian theology needs dialogue for its own sake.

The second part of this creative tension in dialogue is that *true dialogue presupposes commitment*. It means that true dialogue does not imply sacrificing one's own position. He quoted guideline to dialogue⁵⁹⁰ "dialogue means witnessing to our deepest convictions, whilst listening to those of our neighbours". Without my commitment to the gospel, dialogue becomes a mere chatter; without the authentic presence of the neighbours it becomes arrogant and worthless. *Third*, dialogue is only possible if we proceed from the belief that we expect to meet God who has preceded us and has been preparing people within the context of their own cultures and convictions.⁵⁹¹ *Forth*, both dialogue and mission can be conducted only in an attitude of humility. *Fifth*, both dialogue and mission should recognise that religions are worlds in themselves, with their own axes and structures; they face different directions and ask fundamentally different questions. This means, among other things, that the Christian gospel relates differently to Islam, than it does to Hinduism, Buddhism and others.⁵⁹²



For the Indonesian context today, I believe, within *creative tension* as Bosch insisted, both dialogue and mission can be still conducted in an attitude of humility. Christian faith as a religion of grace was freely received through the cross; it is therefore authentically Christian in an attitude of humility in the presence of other faiths. Nobody denies that Jesus did much good, but that in no way saved him from being crucified. The fact that Jesus promised to send his disciples into the world, as 'sheep among the wolves',⁵⁹³ needs to be understood at a deeper level by Christians.

In the process of 'openness' to understand each other, one thing that needs to be emphasised is to respect and accept each other as human beings sharing a

⁵⁸⁹ Bosch 1991:483

⁵⁹⁰ WCC 1979:16; cf. Bosch 1991:484

⁵⁹¹ Bosch 1991:484

⁵⁹² Bosch 1991:465

⁵⁹³ Matthew 10:16-NIV

common humanity, and to respect each other's religion as part of their human values, based in their respective belief systems. As Bosch quoted from Max Warren; "God has already removed the barriers; his Spirit is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding. We do not have him in our pocket, so to speak, and do not just 'take him' to the others; he accompanies us and also comes towards us. We are not the 'haves' of the truth. We are all recipients of the same mercy, sharing in the same mystery. We thus approach every other faith and its adherents reverently, taking off our shoes, as the place we are approaching is holy."⁵⁹⁴ With this kind of understanding and acceptance of each other, togetherness and oneness will be possible to reach, as a basis for building a common brotherhood and nationhood, in this case: an Indonesian identity.

5.2.5 Paul Knitter's new model of truth

Paul Knitter in his book, *No other name*, suggests a new model for a 'more authentic dialogue'. He suggests that a hermeneutics of praxis can be a good tool in inter-religious dialogue to raise some central issues in Christian theology in regard to world religions. He raised questions such as: Is there any revelation and salvation in other religions? What is the content and extent of such revelation? Is Christian truth the corrective, the fulfilment, of other religions?⁵⁹⁵

Knitter's goal with these questions basically is to give more space to other religions to talk about their truth, to talk about their existence. In the past, talking about revelation was only from the Christian side, but today, in the context of pluralism, with the equal right of all traditions and cultures, the concept has been changed. "Today we live in an age of religious pluralism in which the opportunity for a new form of praxis, a 'new originating and self correcting foundation' for Christian belief, is present".⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁴ Bosch 1991:484; cf. Warren 1959:9

⁵⁹⁵ Knitter 1985:206

⁵⁹⁶ Knitter 1985:206

In relation to pluralism, he approaches the inter-religious reality also from a new model, called 'a new model of Truth'. The new model of truth today according to him is not the same as in Western philosophy which is represented by Aristotelian realism. In our world today, the human consciousness is being called to let go of its securities of the past, and to affirm a new understanding of truth, including religious truth.⁵⁹⁷ He suggests that we cannot simply measure the truth against our own truth heritage from the past, including the truth in religion, but we must question and find the new truth which really relates to pluralism, a truth that all religions and cultures can accept as the truth. To know the real truth according to Knitter, we must not only to relate to the Western tradition of Aristotelian realism which was taken over in Christian tradition, but also to other truth traditions.

He describes in his book *One Earth many Religions*, that global responsibility should be a common ground for inter-faith dialogue. He identifies that there are two main things which Christians need to approach with much more sensitivity in dialogue with other faiths: they are 'religious others' and they are in many cases 'suffering others'.⁵⁹⁸ What he means by that is that Christians and other religious neighbours can work together to struggle against oppression, and learn from each other in their common struggle, which he called 'common suffering'.

He put the praxis of inter-faith dialogue in another controversy when he spoke about 'the new model of truth'. He reacted strongly against the notion of the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity by saying that this proposition of "one truth" was 'the old telescope' with which philosophers have searched for truth which has been in use since the time of ancient Greece.⁵⁹⁹ This is the old model of truth. He questions the validity of this proposition which states that, logically, 'one only is the truth and others are false'.⁶⁰⁰ While currently human

⁵⁹⁷ Knitter 1985:219

⁵⁹⁸ Knitter 1995:2

⁵⁹⁹ Knitter (1985:217) explained this new model as follows: "In this proposition, one only the truth and others are false. In logical form of this ancient few it states that "of two positions, one of which affirms something and the other denies the same thing, one must be true and the other false."

⁶⁰⁰ Knitter 1985:217

consciousness, scientific relativity and pluralism have become more dominant, there is a new model on which inter-faith dialogue should be based on. In the new model, the truth becomes 'the truth' by its ability to relate to other expressions of truth.

We can see here, again, the similarity between Knitter's and Samartha's concepts of the truth. Samartha always emphasised that the truth which Jesus promised to His disciples ("when the Spirit comes, the Spirit will lead you in to all the truth"), is not the truth as propositional, but the truth as relational.⁶⁰¹ This is the same with Knitter when he said that the truth only becomes the truth if it is able to relate to other expression of truth; by this he meant the 'truth' in other religions.

Knitter concludes that the truth will no longer be identified by its ability to exclude or absorb others. Rather, what is true will reveal itself mainly by its ability to relate to other expressions of truth and to grow through these relationship truths defined not by exclusion but by relation.⁶⁰² Within a context of pluralism, this new model reflects that no truth can stand alone; no truth can be totally unchangeable. Truth, by its very nature, needs other truth. If it cannot relate, its quality of truth must be open to question.

The new model of Truth by Knitter seriously affects Christian mission. The primary mission of the Church is no longer about 'salvation', but the task of serving and promoting the kingdom of justice and love, by being 'sign and servant', wherever that kingdom may be forming.⁶⁰³ Knitter further suggests that Christian theology about the kingdom of God and mission must be renewed. He added that the Church is not to be identified with God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God in the world is God's revealing and saving presence in the world, and is much broader than the church and also operates through means other than the church.

⁶⁰¹ Samartha 1996:199; cf. John 16:13

⁶⁰² Knitter 1985:219

⁶⁰³ Knitter 1985:222

In relation to Christian missionary work, Knitter believes that this work is to promote the kingdom. He agrees that Christians must witness to Christ, so that all people know Him in order to grasp the full content of God's presence in history. This is the purpose and motivation for missionaries to go to the end of the earth. At the same time, within the new model of truth, he goes further: Christians must also admit that all people must know Buddha, Muhammad, Krishna and others. He believes that they also have a missionary work to the world, including witnessing to Christians, so that Christians might deepen and expand their own grasp of God's presence and purpose in the world. Through this mutual witnessing and this mutual growth, he believes that the work of realising the kingdom moves on.⁶⁰⁴

If inter-faith dialogue should be based on Knitter's new model, it will be a threat to the validity of Christian faith. Jesus Christ who reveals Himself as the only Truth becomes out of date and no longer relevant to these days where pluralism demands the particular truths relate to others. Besides, God within His revelation about His atonement through Jesus Christ will only be a big Liar. Of course, there is no single truth in the name of religion, as religion is man made, but dealing with Jesus himself as the Truth, transcends the realm of religion. He himself, as the only representative of His Father, came from heaven, worked in the world to give salvation to the world, and went back to heaven without depending on the world's acknowledgement: He is the Truth from heaven, and returned to His own glory in heaven after finishing His work. In other words, the truth in Jesus as stated by Him must not be understood qualitatively on par with the truth in other religions, but as an essentially personal Truth which qualifies to measure the truth in religions which is normally seen as qualitative truth.

In the Indonesian context, the sensitivity of 'religious others and the suffering others' might be more relevant today in the struggle together against poverty and injustice, especially in the area of human rights, without reducing the uniqueness of Christ. The dialogue with Muslims is, I believe, still possible to maintain without betraying the uniqueness of Truth in Christ. The only problem is that true dialogue will not be a reality in Indonesia, if justice and democracy

⁶⁰⁴Knitter 1985:222

are always seen from the perspective of one single religious majority. Many Muslims are living in poverty, but it does not mean that all Christians are wealthy. The reality is that the Muslim population is more than the population of all other religions in Indonesia together. Poverty has been a 'long lasting disease' for most of the people of Indonesia, no matter what religion they have followed since independence 1945. The corruption in the country, since 2000, made the economic situation worse than before. To solve these social problems, sensitivity toward all "neighbours", practiced by all people in Indonesia, is urgently needed.

5.2.6 Lochhead and Newbigin's view of 'contextualisation'

Contextualisation is not new in Christian theology and mission. Many Christian scholars have expressed their ideas about this issue, including David Lochhead and Lesslie Newbigin. This issue, nevertheless, is not yet thoroughly studied, especially regarding its implementation and implication in the context of inter-faith dialogue.

In his book, *The Gospel in a pluralist society*, Newbigin comments that if the gospel is to be understood and received as something which communicates truth about the real human situation, it has to be communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them.⁶⁰⁵ This is parallel to what David Bosch describes in his paradigm of '*inculturation*'.⁶⁰⁶ Newbigin believes that the purpose of contextualisation is to help the gospel '*to come alive*' in a particular context.⁶⁰⁷ However, David Lochhead shows that the problem is not with the idea or the purpose of contextual theology itself, but that our contextual analysis has not yet gone far enough.⁶⁰⁸

As Western missionary who was working in Asia, particularly in India within the context of many religions, Newbigin observes contextualisation from the

⁶⁰⁵ Newbigin 1989:141

⁶⁰⁶ Bosch 1991: 447

⁶⁰⁷ Newbigin 1989:152

⁶⁰⁸ Lochhead 1988: 2

classical missionary perspective which is more interested in 'indigenisation', while Lochhead examined the same issue from an inter-faith dialogue perspective. In this regard, Lochhead is closer to Samartha in relating the Christian approach to other faiths.

Newbigin defines contextualisation as the way to communicate the gospel that speaks God's word to the total context in which people are living and have to make their decisions.⁶⁰⁹ By underlining a total context, Newbigin here advocates against 'domestication' as the past mistake made by western missionaries, where Christianity was seen as western culture and evangelism as Christianisation. Lochhead agrees that contextualisation is related to the way the gospel is communicated into the world context today, but he suggests that Christians need to pay more attention to the fact that in the contemporary scene they are called to practice their faith in a world that is marked by religious diversity. By paying attention to these faith diversities, he expects the Christian can learn what mission means in the world today.⁶¹⁰

By realising the diversities between different religions, Lochhead suggests that this new kind of dialogue be practised as 'integration'.⁶¹¹ He was referring to his own experience from a protestant background among the 'Roman Catholic community'. He explained that in this dialogue, the weak points of one's own faith lets one reflect on the strengths of others.⁶¹²

Referring to Asian culture, Newbigin agrees that the story about Gods' presence in the human life is a good example in approaching each religion in that region. He refers to many Asian cultures; he shows that the story about God's trinity is part of their daily life since ancient times. They already have in their minds the consciousness of one God behind many gods.⁶¹³ He nevertheless notes that this must not prevent the Christian view of Jesus as the son of God being explained within the multi-faceted story of God. He claims that the content of

⁶⁰⁹ Newbigin 1989:142

⁶¹⁰ Lochhead 1988:2

⁶¹¹ Lochhead 1988:67

⁶¹² Lochhead 1988:66

⁶¹³ Newbigin 1963:33

the gospel is Jesus Christ in the fullness of his ministry, His death, and His resurrection.⁶¹⁴ He therefore stated that the wise missionary will take time to listen before he talks. If the missionary is wise enough within the context of his hearers, he will know whether God has already prepared the way for them to listen to the gospel.⁶¹⁵

Many Asians consider the idea of trinity as a legend or traditional story, resting upon remnants of an animistic and polytheistic background. The missionaries impatiently adopted some terms which relate to 'trinity' in the Asian cultural for the sake of indigenisation. In reality, unfortunately, the local Christians use the biblical concept of trinity only at church ceremonies, while in their daily life they continually practice what they understand and believe within their own culture, worshiping their ancestors together with the gods of polytheism.⁶¹⁶ This shows that contextualisation in Asia needs further investigation, both in the area of indigenisation and in relation to inter-faith dialogue.

For this need, Newbigin suggested a fresh articulation of the meaning of the missionary task in terms of the pluralistic, polytheistic and pagan society. He believes that even in our modern time the necessity of a Trinitarian starting point is still required, as long as the content of the Gospel is not lost.⁶¹⁷ He believes that Jesus is the centre of the Gospel; that we may see Jesus as who He is, even though our perceptions of him will be shaped by our own situation and the mental formation we have received from our culture. He asserts that our need is to see him as He truly is.⁶¹⁸ He notes that a true doctrine of mission must make a large place for the work of Holy Spirit, and have much to say of God the Father.⁶¹⁹ He means by that, that the Holy Spirit can not be separated from God the Father if we talk about a Christian approach to other faiths.

⁶¹⁴ Newbigin 1989:153

⁶¹⁵ Newbigin 1963:33

⁶¹⁶ This is found among the Christians in Batak Land, north Sumatera, and Indonesia.

⁶¹⁷ Newbigin 1963:34

⁶¹⁸ Newbigin 1989:153

⁶¹⁹ Newbigin 1963:31

In relation to the Bible, Newbigin insisted that every interpretation of the gospel is embodied in some cultural form;⁶²⁰ either by the missionary culture itself, or by the missionised culture. People interpret reality in terms of who they are and where they come from. The Bible itself also originated from certain cultures, languages and translation processes. All theology, and all biblical interpretation, is done from a specific historical situation, it is not done in heaven.⁶²¹ His point is that contextualisation is always connected to the local culture in communicating the gospel.

In the context of the relations between Muslims and Christians in many parts of the world today, these are still deeply influenced by the relationship as defined by events between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. We can understand why Muslims are finding it so difficult to relate well with Christians. The *Crusades* by the Holy Roman Empire to humiliate Muslims under the Ottoman Kingdom in the Middle East, with many Christian slogans and songs to motivate the war, became a dark chapter in history for Christianity, but also created a lasting bitterness in the Muslim world.

In many areas of indigenisation, Christian contextualisation today is still limited in terms of language, church building structures, clothes people are wearing, etc. The Christians try to contextualise all those things according to their local cultural needs, including the bible translation into many tribal languages (in Indonesia and many parts of the world). Contextualisation, nevertheless, is still one of the ongoing problems in Christianity.

Even though this kind of contextualisation has achieved so much in terms of Christian mission in the past, nevertheless a further analysis on the details of contextualisation, as Lochhead expected, or a fresh look towards the Christian missionary task, as Newbigin suggested, need to be implemented deeper and broader, especially in the context of inter-faith dialogue.

⁶²⁰ Newbigin 1989:144

⁶²¹ Newbigin 1989:149

For the Indonesian context today where the population are predominantly Muslims, this is probably the time to seriously reconsider the contextualisation method suggested by an Indonesian Muslim convert, Sadrach Surapranata (1928).⁶²² In his approach, Surapranata did not use any Christian terms, but Arabic as the Muslims normally use in performing their faith. The word 'Christianity' to him and for many Muslims is synonymous to Western or American culture, colonialism, immorality and dirt. If any Muslim converts to Christianity, he or she was counted as convert to immorality. This group therefore, tries to avoid as much as possible the Christian terminology.⁶²³

John Travis, one of the American missionaries with many years experience working among the Muslims in Asia explains this new believer group as follows: they worship God, their services look like normal Muslim worship in the mosque; they keep the fast; avoid eating pork and drinking alcohol, they still use the Islamic terms and dress code. They all look almost entirely of Muslim background, but they call themselves *the follower of Isa Al-Masih* (Jesus the Messiah) instead of *Christian*. Travis, categorises these converts as part of the C4 and C5 model (see pages **).⁶²⁴ The popular name of C5 nowadays is '*The insider Movement*'.⁶²⁵

Besides reconsidering Surapranata and Travis's categories, there are some practical issues which Christians in Indonesia need also to consider. There are certain terms in the Bible which sounds aggressive and confrontative to other neighbours, and which need special attention for a successful contextualisation in the Indonesian culture. Such terms which were used in the time of the Crusades to motivate the Christian army in defeating the Muslim armies are: e.g. Christ's Army⁶²⁶; to fight against the principles; to conquer the Land; Stand up for Jesus; the spirit in you is bigger than other spirit in the world, and others.

⁶²² Azumah 2009:2

⁶²³ Azumah 2009:2

⁶²⁴ Azumah 2009:2; cCf. Travis (a pseudonym) 1998:407-8, explaining the C4 model: Contextualized Christ centred communities using local language and biblically permissible cultural and Islamic forms. C5 model: Christ centred communities of "Messianic Muslims" who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He distinguished Christians in five categories: C1, C2, C3, C4, and C5 (Christian 1 etc)

⁶²⁵ Azumah 2009:3

On the Islamic side objections which need to be clarified in the formal dialogue, Brewster mentions e.g. 'jihad', crusades, colonialism and Zionism.⁶²⁷ These terms somehow, have contributed towards '*superiority feeling*' and *arrogance* for the Christians towards non-Christians, and have led to historical tensions between Muslims and Christians.

Christians need to ask if those terms were originally inspired by the Holy Spirit and which thus still need to be translated deeper into Indonesian culture, or whether they were just added by the Ancient Christian leaders for motivating their armies to war and to conquer the land in the time of colonialism. Re-studying the Bible hermeneutically in the Indonesian context today is, I believe, a priority. In such studies, 'harmony' instead of 'disharmony', equality instead of subordination, inclusiveness instead of exclusivity, should be emphasised. It does not mean that by reinterpreting those terms we reduce or change the word of God. The point here is that the written word of God in the Bible is really speaking in the cultural context, in the soul or language of the Indonesian people.

Besides contextualising some biblical terms, some Christian doctrines from Christian traditions also require a fresh look: such as 'God's trinity', Jesus the 'son of God', and the 'Holy spirit'. Some scholars like Samartha, Knitter and Hick even suggest that a Theo-centric approach is better than a Christ-centric one in a pluralistic context. It means the story about Jesus is nothing less than a story about God for the sake of human relations. I am not totally in agreement with this idea, but to approach those terms, it might be better to consider Newbigin's suggestion about the *Trinitarian story* in each receiver's culture.

I am aware that this kind of contextualisation does not guarantee that there will be no tension between Christians and their Muslim neighbours in Indonesia, but in the context of inter-faith dialogue, the reinterpreting of such terms in the Bible hopefully will help to minimise the gap and tensions between Christians and

⁶²⁶ Christ's Army is translated in Indonesian 'Laskar Kristus' which means ready to go to war with gun to destroy their enemies. This word is parallel with 'Jihad army' in Islam.

⁶²⁷ Brewster 1979:525

Muslims, in what David Bosch called a 'creative tension'.⁶²⁸ In such renewed attention for core concepts that led to misunderstanding, there is no room left for superiority, arrogance or confrontation, but in order to maintain a true dialogue, equality and humility as brothers and sisters in one big Indonesian family are the requirements.

In my opinion as Indonesian Christian, the main issue in the missionary approach is not whether a Theo-centric or Christ-centric approach is better or more relevant, but how to present the story of salvation by Christ to those who have not heard the good news as yet. The world must know that God became human to restore humanity, so that the humans become godly people, fulfilling their task to each other and to God. Whether they believe it or not, that is depending on every one's own responsibility.

5.3 A Constructive Proposal: a Theoretical Model for Inter-Faith Dialogue in Indonesia

Based on the six points above, which can be considered in the process of finding a constructive proposals for inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia, I now try to suggest such a new missionary paradigm as part of the inter-faith dialogue itself, by reinterpreting the Great Commission in the Bible within the reality of Indonesian cultures.

5.3.1 The Great Commission: 'Christ', not 'Christianity'

There are two principles defining the role of Christians in the world: *to witness about Jesus' love* and *to disciple the people who positively respond* to the calling of the gospel through witness. Jesus' great commission is to go to all nations, to witness about Him and make the nations to be His disciples.⁶²⁹ To 'witness' here does not necessarily mean to memorise the Bible verses and preach them to other people, neither to promote the kingdom of God in the universal way according to Knitter's concept, but to witness about Christ is to let

⁶²⁸ Nussbaum 2005:3

⁶²⁹ Mat. 28:18-20

others know through the words and deeds that Christ Jesus has redeemed people of their sin. This redemption is God's mission to the world in which He calls the church as His instrument.

Nababan identifies five reasons for mission: Firstly, as obedient response to Jesus' great commission. Secondly, the eschatological fulfilment: where Jesus will judge all people in the last day. Thirdly, The love of Jesus, 'for God so loves the world that He sends His only Son to die on the cross, that the people who believe in Him are not perish, but have the eternal life'.⁶³⁰ Fourthly, the soteriological reason: where the believers must proclaim about Jesus to the world, for them to get eternal salvation, and the fifth is the service: where the Christians are called to serve Christ through serving the others with Christ's love. Nababan believes that obedience to Christ's mission is not because other religions are 'wrong'. He insisted that Christians must avoid the judgemental and stereotyping attitude towards others.⁶³¹ Christ here is still the centre of mission. Christians obey Christ's commission to share about Christ's love to others, and serving them with Christ's love, that they may know Christ had redeemed them from sin and gave them the eternal life - this is to witness about Christ to others. Christianity is not the focus of Christian witness, but Christ.

To witness is sharing Christian faith experience as Jesus' followers. How the written gospel about Jesus in the Bible affects my faith through life experience, is the message that needs to be forwarded to other neighbours. At the same time, we must listen to their faith experience and take it as knowledge enrichment. Hallencreutz prefers to describe this witness as 'honest confrontation' between adherents of different religions. He explains that in this dialogue, each participant meets and challenges the other, testifying to the depth of his or her own faith experience. He goes further, as implication of this 'witness', to say that the Christian is challenged to listen to his or her partner and understand the partner of another faith.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Nababan 2006:57 Cf. John 3:16.

⁶³¹ Nababan 2006:57

⁶³² Hallencreutz 1969:17

In this case, Christians should not have to worry about their partner's response in dialogue, but they should worry about their own faithful witness about Jesus' love to their partners. The Holy Spirit will do His work to convince or to harden their partner's heart. God is the one who can change people's minds, and to bring those people to God's salvation. Christians, as part of the human family, are only instruments to show who Jesus is through their daily Christian lives. This is in line with Ralph D. Winter's approach to Muslims: that "our calling is to preach Christ, not Christianity...They don't have to wear our cultural clothing. They can believe while still wearing their own cultural clothing".⁶³³ It is not so clear whether Winter agrees with Travis's model 'C5', that a Muslim can remain a Muslim legally and socially, while confessing Jesus as their Saviour.

Winter here makes a clear distinction between Christ and Christianity. Christians are called to witness about Christ's love. If we agree with the Muslim discourse that Christian missionary work or *evangelising* is tantamount to Christianisation, *dialogue*, in the present context, can be seen as simply sharing Christ and not 'Christianity', and is thus not part of Christianisation. I share my faith experience in Christ with my Muslim friend, and listen to his faith experience in Islam; this is part of mutual understanding and mutual sharing and respect. No one tries to influence the other. Unfortunately, Christianity has been contaminated by human ambitions, war, colonialism and political oppression etc, but Christ has never changed and can never be contaminated by any human interest. His essential Truth is not depending on being tested by other truths, or being complimented by other truths. His Truth is sufficient anywhere and anytime. The question is: where is the place of discipling in the interfaith dialogue process? This question will be answered in the next point.

5.3.2 Dialogical Relationship

The great commission of Jesus to make all nations to become His disciples can not be separated from His great commandment to His disciples, to love one's neighbour as Christ has loved them. Lochhead insisted that to love one's neighbour is not possible in monological mode but only in dialogical mode. He

⁶³³ Winter 2008:5

therefore believes that making disciples is also a dialogical process, a so-called *dialogical imperative*. It means that it is imperative for Christians to relate to other people, to relate to their neighbours irrespective of their culture, religion and tradition, to love them unconditionally as Christ has loved His disciples. He goes further saying that “to speak of the dialogical imperative is an abstract and secular way to speak of the commandment of neighbourly love”. He then explained further that to love one’s neighbour as oneself means to be in a dialogical relationship with one’s neighbour. He specifically underlines the fact that the New Testament puts the command in striking form: we are to love our neighbours ‘as God has loved us’.⁶³⁴

He also concedes that ‘to love the neighbours’ in this context is in ‘servanthood’ of Christ, not in his ‘Kingship.’ That is the paradigm that lies behind the commandment to Christian self-giving. The *kenosis* of Christ, which in its openness and vulnerability leaves Christians free to respond either by entering a dialogical relationship with Christ (by responding to the openness and vulnerability of Christ with openness and vulnerability of our own) or by remaining closed and unresponsive.⁶³⁵ *Dialogical relationship* can be implemented in various places, in the residential communities, work places, market places, hospitals, campuses, etc. In this thesis, this insight will specifically be focused on residential communities and campuses.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁴ Lochhead 1988:80

⁶³⁵ Locchead 1988: 80

⁶³⁶ I have been working for ten years in South Africa as missionary among the Muslim communities and Muslim students at different campuses. I have been training the Christian students to dialogue with their Muslim student friends in a friendly way. In dialogue we listen to each other about our different faith experiences, and we are learning from each other about the commitment to our own faith without confrontation, without feeling strangers to each other, and without feeling intimidated by our diversities. In the discussion, I sometimes felt being put down as a Christian by dialogue partners because of the past history in South Africa, where ‘apartheid’ was upheld by people who were called ‘Christians’. But Jesus’ servanthood and His compassion during his three years ministry inspired me, and strengthened me in my personal belief and commitment to Him as my Lord and Saviour. For to me, life is Christ, in His death and resurrection. If I am still alive, it means it is to serve Him in proclaiming His love to all people including to all my Muslim friends with all my heart; not to replace their religion, but to let them know that Jesus’ love on the cross is also to reconcile them to God the Father or the Creator, and to pay all transgressions we made in life. Let the Muslims judge their own heart by themselves, should they follow Jesus Christ who gives them eternal life, or should they follow the human law by their own strength?

In his analysis of dialogical relationship, Lochhead argued that Christian discipleship involves a call to unconditional openness to the neighbours.⁶³⁷

Christians can not be isolated on their own island, since Jesus commands them to love their neighbours and make the nations His disciples. In this openness is also included a serious attempt to understand other religions in the community.

In the Indonesian context today, Christians should work towards a better understanding of Islam as a religion, and Indonesian Muslims as a religious people who embrace Islam. To me as Indonesian Christian, this is an urgent need, in order for the Christians to know how to love their Muslim neighbours. Loving Indonesian Muslims, as Lochhead mentioned above, must be practiced by Indonesian Christians 'in Christ's servanthood', instead of 'in Christ's kingship'. It means, that Christians in their approach to their Muslim neighbours, have to be 'servants', serving others like Jesus was serving people in His time, even though the service had to end up on the cross. In this context we agree with Yewangoe and Samartha, when they talked about Christians who are called to serve others, not to convert others.

This was the missing point from Christianity since the Dutch Colonial setup introduced Christianity to Indonesia and many other parts of the world. The Western colonials came as the 'kings' who wanted to expand their territories, and to enslave the Indonesian people in many ways. In the Indonesian national history, it was thus taught from generation to generation that Christianity was a Western colonial religion, and that the original Indonesian religion is Islam.

This attitude should not be continued in the country where 'Pancasila' serves as a political foundation and national symbol. Pancasila itself enables people to dialogue between themselves, to respect each other within their diversity in culture and religions.

According to Muslim believes, Islam means 'peace in submission to God'. The word 'Islam' is derived from 'Salam'. 'Muslim' means the people who submit to God's will or surrender to God's will. For Muslim understanding, all people who

⁶³⁷ Lochhead 1988:81

really surrender to God, and who are devoted to God, are called Muslims whether they realise it or not. Yusuf Ali, referring to Qur'an (Surah 5:85), insisted that the sincere Christians are Muslims in their hearts. They are also people devoted to, surrendered to, God.⁶³⁸ Surrender to God is symbolised by bowing to worship Him. By that, Muslims claim that Islam is the universal religion who already started from Adam, including Jesus and His disciples. Ali goes further to explain via Surah 5:114 that Jesus and His disciples were Muslims.⁶³⁹ To their conviction, Islam is the oldest religion, the clean and the perfect one. Muhammad is the last prophet who was sent by God (Allah) to perfect all religions before him. They believe that Muhammad was sent to call all the human being back to Islam as the origin universal religion since Adam. This concept can only be changed through the discipling process, when the Holy Spirit convinces a Muslim to come to Christ and accept Him as his/her Lord and Saviour. Even though the old religious concepts (about Mohamed as prophet, etc.) does not change, or even though a Christian may disagree that Jesus's disciples were Muslim (because the Bible did not indicate so), yet there is no hindrance preventing me from relating to my Muslim friend in mutual respect or him to relate to me as Christian. In mutual respect, there is a space for these Christian-Muslim disagreements.

5.3.3 The important point for Christian dialogue with Muslims: Face the facts

Indonesian Christians need to understand the historical relationship between Islam and Christianity. Besides the historical war between Christianity and the Islamic Empire in the 11th to 13th centuries, there also lingers the bitterness of slavery under the Western Christian colonial powers until into the 20th century.

⁶³⁸ Yusuf Ali (1946:268) interpreted Surah 5:85: "...*Find those who say, 'We are Christians': because amongst these are Men devoted to learning...*", he explain on the note (789), the meaning is not that they merely call themselves Christians, but that they are such sincere Christians that they appreciate Muslim virtues, as did the Abissinians to whom Muslim refugees went during the persecution in Mecca. They would say: It is true we are Christians, but we understand your point of view, and we know you are good men." They are Muslim at heart, whatever their label may be.

⁶³⁹ Ali (1946:278) interpreted Surah 5:114: "...*The Disciples to have faiths in Me and Mine Apostle: They said, 'We have faith, and do thou bear witness that we bow to God as Muslims'*". He explain in the note 823 and 824, that the disciples address "Thou" to Jesus, and before or after Muhammad's life on this earth, all who bowed to God's Will were Muslims, and their religion is Islam. Cf. Ali (1946:136) Surah 3:52 and foot note 392

The Christians can not erase the fact that the crusades by the Roman Empire towards the Muslim world brought a very painful experience for the Muslim world, and created tensions between the generations of both sides. By learning this history together with an the open mind, will help the modern generations to understand each other and accept each other's diversities, without repeating the same mistake in the new history to be made.

The Islamic movement in Indonesia, since 2000, is totally different than the years before. The reformation in the political system, especially the changing from centralisation to decentralisation by the government since 2000, brought Islam into the most glorious power compared to the time, when Soeharto was still in power (1968-1998). During Soeharto's regime, no other ideology was allowed to be used as a national political foundation except 'Pancasila' (Five Principles). The Success of Soeharto with this system was supported by militarism and a tightly controlled centralised system.

Arifianto, one of the Indonesian correspondents of the Department of Political Science at Arizona State University, Tempe, USA, explained that the root of religious tension in Indonesia is 'fear', similar to Mujiburrahman's analysis before. Christians fear Islamisation in Indonesia, and Muslims are fearing Christianisation as one of the very root causes of religious tension, which aversely affects the political and economic situation in the country.⁶⁴⁰ One possibility to reduce these fears is through the promotion of genuine inter-religious dialogue between adherents of Islam and Christianity in Indonesia. Such dialogue should take place not only between the leaders, but also among the grassroots members of the two religions. The fear among the grassroots (about 'Christianisation' and 'Islamisation'), is higher than among the elite leaders, because they enjoy more regular interaction with members of other religious traditions.⁶⁴¹

Arifianto suggested that what had been needed as a facilitator for dialogue was inter-faith religious services where followers of both religions are invited to

⁶⁴⁰ Mujiburrahman 2006:251; cf. Arifianto 2009:86

⁶⁴¹ Arifianto 2009:86

attend and participate. Another was to conduct inter-faith seminars or discussion groups that explore the shared teachings of the two religious traditions. He added that the government must stand neutral and that non-intervention in the area of religious life and practice in Indonesia had to be practised. But on the other hand, the government should take a firm stand against radical and extremist groups within both religions, thus preventing them from promoting hatred and violence against one another, and bringing them to justice if they commit acts of violence.⁶⁴² In reality today, according to many observations, it is very difficult for the government to stand firm, especially towards radical Muslims.⁶⁴³ As Mujiburrahman stated, “the Muslim-Christian antagonism did not stop because the regime was not always consistent with its ideological position”.⁶⁴⁴

Beverly Milton-Edward, one of the experts in Islamic politics from Queen’s University in Belfast, revealed in his book *Islamic Fundamentalism since 1945*, that the agenda of Muslims is normally spread as new identity through revivalism in Islam. He wrote: “The agenda of Muslim renewal or revival centred on both a personal and political dimension to identity...was translated into political and social action around Muslim perspectives on governance, civil society, economic reform and law”.⁶⁴⁵

Edward’s view is right in terms of what the revival means for Islam, which is always related to their new identity and the new political agenda, economy and civil society. The same has happened in Indonesia; the political reformation demanded by the people since 1998, had brought plenty advantages for Muslims, and has strengthened new Islamic politics since 2000. Islamic law (shari’ah) in the national politics have influenced various sectors: the educational system, economic policy, religious affairs, the political and judicial system. All these sectors have been Islamised and this has been implemented systematically. One single agenda is ‘Indonesia has to be a Muslim state’, by first establishing an Islamic society.

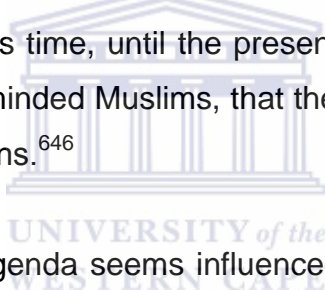
⁶⁴² Arifianto 2009:73-89

⁶⁴³ Sugy Haryadi 2011

⁶⁴⁴ Mujiburrahman 2006:304

⁶⁴⁵ Edward 2005: 51-2

Indonesian Christians must not be surprised by this current change. The political frustration by Indonesian reformist Muslims about the political strategy of the New Order had reached its climax by 1982. By the late 1980s, when the reformist Islam became much stronger, the government became more accommodative to Islamic groups. In 1989, some Muslim interests were accommodated, such as a new Education Law, Religious Court Law, the establishment of the Indonesia Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI), support for the establishment of an Islamic Bank (Bank Muamalat Indonesia), and growing support for the Muslim News paper, Republika. In this period, not only the Muslim reformist movement was shaking Christianity, but also in Soeharto's regime a big transition was happening. A decline of the influence of Christians in the higher positions of the intelligence service and armed forces took place under this regime. Many of these influential Christians were replaced by reformist Muslims. Since this time, until the present, some Muslim Intellectuals affirmed, like the reformist-minded Muslims, that the time had come for Muslims to take 'revenge' on Christians.⁶⁴⁶



The Indonesian Muslims' agenda seems influenced by their neighbour country 'Malaysia', where this country under Mahathir's power (1981-2008) is striving for achieving a distinctly Islamic political dominance extending into the realms of culture, economics and politics.⁶⁴⁷ There are three main effects of their strategies in Malaysia which also have a very strong influence in Indonesia: firstly, that the religious freedom is only for the Muslims but not for non-Muslims. The second reality is that destruction of the Churches and other Christian properties has been continuing, as well as the difficulty of Christians in obtaining permission to build or rent premises for worship. The third is that the Christians can no longer use some Malay religious terms of Arabic origin in Christian publications in the national language, including the word "Allah".⁶⁴⁸ Even though the Malaysian court had approved the case in 2010, that the Christian Bible can

⁶⁴⁶ Mujiburrahman 2006:279-280

⁶⁴⁷ Hunt 2009:588

⁶⁴⁸ Hunt 2009:589

continue to use the word 'Allah', the Islamic hardliners are still opposing the court decision.

This kind of struggle, among many other similar ones, serves as an example of the hardships that Christians in Indonesia must face, whether they like it or not. The political tension which relates to religion will always be a main issue if the understanding about democracy is always interpreted from mainly religious perspectives. The Christians in Indonesia will remain as the small 'sheep community' among the huge 'wolves', as Jesus already warned His followers.⁶⁴⁹

In this unpleasant environment, Christians in Indonesia need to understand at least five points about Islam and their Muslim neighbours:⁶⁵⁰

1. Why did Muhammad reject the concept of the Trinity held by the Christians he knew?

Most of the Christians who met with Muhammad in his time were mainly sects. They had the wrong view of the Trinity, such as Father, Mary, and Jesus. Not only Muhammad rejected this view, but also the true Christian doctrines rejected this description, because it contradicted the Biblical concept. Unfortunately, many Muslims are still holding on to the wrong understanding until today, because the Qur'an clearly says it is to 'blaspheme' to believe the Christian idea of Trinity.⁶⁵¹

2. Why did he come up with the idea that Jesus did not die on the Cross?

Many scholars believe that he was reacting against Jews who claimed Jesus was nobody because they were able to kill him. After the Crusades, Muslims took that passage in the Qur'an to mean that Christians were wrong. In other

⁶⁴⁹ Mathew 10:16 (NIV)

⁶⁵⁰ Winter 2008:4 (some explanations in these points were developed by me as researcher, and give the reference in the Qur'an to make it more clear)

⁶⁵¹ Ali 1946:266 Cf. Surah 5:76."They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity. For there is no god except One God..."; that Jesus is no more than an apostle (Surah 5:78).

words, Muhammad wanted to defend Jesus as a good prophet; He did not die, but someone was killed by Jews, and Jesus was taken up to heaven at the same time.⁶⁵²

3. What person in the Qur'an has the attributes of Divinity?

Clearly, it is Jesus. That is why quite a few Muslims who understand the Qur'an have become full believers in Jesus.⁶⁵³ Winter insisted that very few Muslims can understand the Qur'an (even scholars), due to its ancient Arabic - even if they memorise it in its entirety, which millions do. He means that many Muslims can only memorise the Qur'an, but not really understand because of the ancient Arabic.

4. Why do 30 million Christians in the world today pray to 'Allah' and read the same word for God in their Bibles?

For 500 years before Muhammad was born Christians speaking Arabic people used the word 'Allah' for God. It is not an ideal word for God except that no word in any language is ideal. The English use of 'GOD', which has a pagan background, becomes acceptable once it is in the Bible. ('LORD' in the Bible refers to Yahweh/Jehovah in the Old Testament who revealed Himself to Moses and throughout Israelite history, before being incarnated in Jesus Christ).

Missionaries have employed hundreds of words for God in the contextualisation process, all of them with original pagan meanings, but in the evangelism context, these names all refer to 'YaHWeH' (The LORD) as written in the Old Testament: 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'.

5. Why do many Muslims pray five times a day?

Christians with whom Muhammad was in contact prayed six times a day, every four hours, including at midnight time. Muhammad thought that was a good idea

⁶⁵² Ali 1946:230 Cf. Surah 4:157-158

⁶⁵³ Surah 3:45 described that Jesus is nearest to God (Ali 1946:134)

but eliminated the midnight prayer time.

Besides the above points, the Indonesian Christians also need to know that the Qur'an also says positive things, besides the negative things, about Christians: that "the Christians are not arrogant",⁶⁵⁴ "Jesus is sinless," and that "Jesus is the Kalimah Allah" (Word of God). In maintaining inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia, Christians therefore, need to have a deep understanding about some significant points in Islam, to help them to be spiritually ready to give testimony about the hope they have in Christ.⁶⁵⁵

Gerhard Nehls, a German missionary who was working among the Muslims in South Africa, encouraged his fellow Christians not to give up in spreading the good news of Jesus to Muslims anywhere with love and respect. He insisted that Christians are not called to fight their Muslim fellow citizens. "We are told not even only to tolerate our enemies, but to love them - even when they do not return our love and refuse to come to the Saviour!"⁶⁵⁶

5.3.4 A global cosmic dialogue for justice, peace, and a sustainable world

In Christian mission, it is believed that the church is called to overcome injustice, and to promote justice, peace and life. But in the current global issues, such as global warming, ecological disaster and the challenge of a sustainable world, these issues must also become part of the Church's mission. As part of the world community, the Christians and people of other faiths must work together for a sustainable world. Lochhead calls this dialogue a 'cosmic dialogue' - where everybody from different faiths can work together without feeling that they are betraying their own faith missions.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁴ Ali (1946:268) explains Surah 5:85f, stating that the Christians are not arrogant, by referring to the Christians in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in the time of Muhammad and his followers as refugees in that country. The Christians' attitude contrasted sharply with those of the Pharisees and Scribes.

⁶⁵⁵ 1Pet.3:15

⁶⁵⁶ Nehls and Eric 2002:6

⁶⁵⁷ Lochhead 1988:88

The WCC had maintained this calling through its Assembly in Colombo (1978). They had produced some significant declarations about the global responsibility towards 'the cosmos'.⁶⁵⁸ One of the statements that all the participants endorsed was: 'that man and nature are mutually related to one another. A change in one will bring a change in the other'.⁶⁵⁹ 'Man' is regarded as part of Nature, in that a human being is a complex organism deriving its material substance from the material realm and eventually disintegrating (at death), with the material elements being reabsorbed into their source.⁶⁶⁰ Because God is the creator of the universe, the implication of this from the Christian point of view, according to Lynn de Silva, is that the natural world is not self-contained; it does not have an independent existence of its own; the human being is called into a special relationship to God; he is responsible as steward in nature and accountable to the Creator.⁶⁶¹ The same topic was touched on again at the 9th Assembly in Brazil (2006).⁶⁶²

Indonesia is known as archipelago, with more than seventeen thousand islands and a population of two hundred and a thirty million. As one of the 'equator countries', the climate and pollution become part of the national issue which needs a solution together with the environmental problems. Cosmic dialogue as Lochhead suggest is very relevant for inter-faith dialogue in this country. The fundamental motto of Indonesia, 'Azas Gotong royong' (working together),⁶⁶³ can be a very significant instrument in maintaining the cosmic dialogue. The engagement of all people in Indonesia (irrespective of their religions) to be involved in the global dialogue, is very necessary.

Catholicos Aram I, as moderator at the 9th WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 14th 2006, declared that Inter-Faith Dialogue is compulsory for the Churches in witnessing their faith. In dialogue, the church must have the strong foundation of faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He

⁶⁵⁸ Samartha 1975: 5

⁶⁵⁹ Samartha 1975:97.

⁶⁶⁰ Samartha 1975:100

⁶⁶¹ Samartha 1975:98

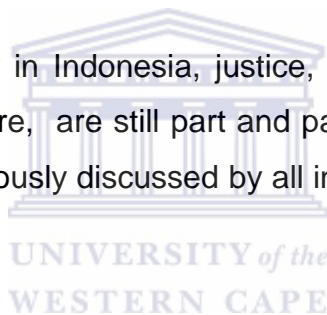
⁶⁶² Sinaga 2006:26

⁶⁶³ 'Working together' (Gotong Royong - Indonesian) is similar to the current slogan in South Africa, 'the spirit of Ubuntu'.

assured that proclaiming and witnessing of Jesus Christ is not the obstacle for the Christians to dialogue with other neighbours. He believes that within diversities and the uniqueness of each religion we can dialogue constructively.⁶⁶⁴

The interesting point is that the idea of inter-faith dialogue here is now different from the dialogue concept which Samartha and Knitter promoted since 1971. For Samartha and his pluralist colleagues, the inter-faith dialogue forum is not an appropriate medium for witnessing about Christian faith, but only for searching a common humanity. Witnessing of Christian faith to them is the same as proselytism, and is no longer relevant in the pluralist context. It seems there is a changing concept of inter-faith dialogue within WCC after Samartha left the WCC.

In Asia indeed, particularly in Indonesia, justice, peace and human rights as Samartha emphasised before, are still part and parcel of the main ecumenical agenda and need to be seriously discussed by all involved, as part of mission in inter-faith dialogue.



The Indonesian Christians, therefore, are called by God together with people of other faiths to work together to make this world a better place, but also to promote justice, peace and security. “Whatever you do, do it not for man, but for God. Do to others whatever you want the others to do for you.” This is the sign of being Jesus’ disciples: to love others, as evidence of being obedient to His commandment.

⁶⁶⁴ The above statement was translated from Indonesian: “Menyangkut masalah pluralitas agama, moderator menyatakan bahwa dialogue antar agama adalah merupakan keharusan bagi gereja. Dalam hal ini, ditekankan bahwa dalam berdialogue, gereja harus memiliki dasar dan keyakinan ‘yang kuat, yang didasarkan pada iman kepada Tuhan Allah: Bapa, Anak dan Roh Kudus. ..Moderator menekankan bahwa menyatakan dan menyaksikan iman kepada Yesus Kristus, bukanlah menjadi penghalang bagi orang Kristen untuk berdialogue dengan

5.3.5 Dialogue as Witness: Love your Muslim neighbours

It is difficult to have a dialogue or a natural conversation in a community when people feel threatened by each other and suspicious of each other. Feeling intimidated or threatened by someone in the name of religion, will be a serious obstacle to living in harmony with neighbours, also in Indonesia. Christians nevertheless, anywhere and at any time, must relate and dialogue with anyone in the community, irrespective what their religions are. As Lochhead insisted, the choice between dialogue and monologue in our relationships is not a choice between two methods, but the choice between death and life, if to be human is to live in the community. He adds that monologue is to cut ourselves off from our own humanity. According to him, to choose monologue is to choose death.⁶⁶⁵

Lochhead seems too extreme in his statement, but he is truly correct in his assessment in the context of pluralism. Living in the community can not be separated from other neighbours. Dialogue in this case becomes a living relationship. The question for the Christian being in the community with their special mission 'making disciples' is: 'how could Christian faith become expressed as a living reality in order to become deeply incarnate in daily life?'⁶⁶⁶ Samartha had 'incarnated' his missionary view into inter-faith dialogue as expression of his love for his Hindu neighbours. Shall we see this as parallel to Muslim neighbours in Indonesia, and if so, how should this incarnation be viewed and lived?

Indonesia with more than 350 tribes, with different cultures, religions, traditions, customs and languages, need to dialogue with each other, to learn from each other and understand each other as 'our nation', as one Indonesia. In other words, dialogue is not necessarily inter-faith dialogue, but can be 'inter-cultural dialogue' or 'inter-tradition' dialogue, where the people from different

saudara-saudara yang memiliki agama yang berbeda. Malahan dengan kejelasan kekhususan, keunikan dan kekhasan setiap agamalah kita dapat melakukan dialogue yang konstruktif."

⁶⁶⁵ Lochhead 1988:79

⁶⁶⁶ Lochhead 1988:79

backgrounds, faiths and traditions can sit together to discuss the various issues in the community and find common solutions.

Christians can participate in such dialogue, raise issues to be discussed, and present some 'services' that they can offer as part of the solution that dialogue seeks to achieve. At this level, Christians fulfil their calling, as servants ready to serve. This is what Christians can do to serve the community without it being labelled 'evangelism' or other terms which are offensive to their Muslim neighbours.

The Christians can offer this service, offering their partners 'the fresh Living water' to satisfy the thirstiness in the community, and giving them 'refreshment' from the tiredness of injustice in the community. This is a Christian's task as the light in the community; to serve others with love. This illustrates the truth expressed by a Buddhist monk, Dharmapala: 'If Christianity wants to be established in the East, it can only be done on the principles of Christ's love and meekness'. Samartha also refers to what this monk was saying about the western culture in East Asia, when he challenged the western missionaries by saying: "Let the missionaries study all religions, but let them be a type of meekness and lowliness and they will find a welcome in all lands".⁶⁶⁷ Love and meekness is still what the world needs most.

In the current social and political situation in Indonesia, it is not easy for the Christians to express their faith verbally to their Muslim neighbours, yet Jesus was firm in His commandment to His disciples, "love one another that others may know that you are my disciples: if you love one another". It means that to attract other people (including Muslim neighbours in Indonesia) to be Christ's disciples in the community, it is not necessary to launch preaching campaigns about love, or to invite people to church services, but simply through expression of love, like Jesus, who was related to many Jews who hated Him, but also to non-Jews who crucified Him. Lochhead again addresses the same issue, that the commandment to love 'one's neighbour' as Christ has loved us, is translated for the Christian into the dialogical imperative, the imperative to seek dialogue

and to be open to dialogue whenever and from whomever it is offered.⁶⁶⁸ I call this method '*inter-cultural dialogue*⁶⁶⁹ whereby Christians serve others in love through action, like Jesus Christ when He was serving all people according to their needs.

Based on the report of the 9th WCC Assembly in Brazil, five years ago, it can be said that proclaiming and witnessing of Jesus Christ should not be an obstacle for Christians to engage in dialogue with other neighbours, but they can be more involved in constructive dialogue, without fear or unnecessary inhibition. This is the kind of uninhibited '*inter-faith dialogue*⁶⁷⁰, which we need to develop creatively and sensitively in Indonesia. The Brazil Assembly report gives the 'fresh air' for the Christians who are affiliated with the WCC, not to be confused with the previous theological concept of dialogue in the WCC history, that had taken away the proclamation and witness of the gospel from dialogue with people of other faiths.

5.4 Inter-faith Dialogue based on common cultural elements

Michael Youssef, one of the Anglican ministers in Australia, born in Egypt and an expert in Christians-Muslims encounter, observed that Muslims are divided into hundreds of "homogeneous units" who are different from each other geographically, ethnically, ideologically, culturally, and often theologically.⁶⁷¹ In Iran, besides the ethnic diversities between Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish speaking Muslims, there are Gulani, Baluchi and Luri speaking groups, and also the doctrinal division between Shiah, Sunnis, Bahais, Ishmaelites, Ahl-i-Haqq, Yezidis, communists, secularists and others. Youssef therefore, suggested that in encounter with Muslims, we must not use only one method. He believes different contexts and different ethnic needs require different approaches.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁷ Samartha 1996:180-181; cf. Braybrooke 1992:31

⁶⁶⁸ Lochhead 1988:81

⁶⁶⁹ Nazir Ali defined this dialogue in to two kind of dialogue: "Common humanity dialogue and Dialogue to building up community". Cf. Ali 1995:110 and this thesis 4.1.3.

⁶⁷⁰ Ali also divided this dialogue in to two kind of dialogue: "discursive dialogue and spiritual dialogue". Cf. Ali 1995:110 and this thesis 4.1.3

⁶⁷¹ Youssef 1981:659

In the Indonesian cultural context, there are two common elements on which the Christians and Muslims can dialogue together freely, namely peace and harmony.

5.4.1 Peace and harmony

In general, Indonesian culture emphasises peace and harmony more than any kind of confrontation. The Indonesians prefer to please others even though they might not be agreeing on certain issues or decisions. A person may voluntarily be choosing to suffer physically as consequence of the choice he or she made, instead of being put to shame in public. The most difficult for Indonesian people personally is to say 'no' for someone's request. If the choice made ends up with failure, it may lead to another fatal choice: to die instead of bearing life long shame. Someone could choose to sacrifice his or her life if it brings peace and harmony for other people left behind. On the other hand, a person could easily say 'yes' to a request, without necessarily agreeing with that request.

Athyal described the Asian mentality as having a tendency of "all ideas are right, all faiths are the same, and we simply call the one reality by different names".⁶⁷³ This compromise does not mean that they all agree to what the other is thinking, but it reflects the harmony they desire in the community; they will not raise their disagreement publicly but rather hide it or grumble secretly.

Based on the cultural desire of peace and harmony, as common ground, it is possible to maintain an inter-cultural dialogue among the Indonesian people. The inter-cultural dialogue can save the nation from chaos and racial tensions. All participants in this dialogue must come to agreement that real peace and real harmony, among the different cultures and religions, can only happen when everybody first make peace with God and live in harmonious personal relationship with God. For the Christian, the real peace and harmony is of course only found through a total union with Christ.

⁶⁷² Youssef 1981: 660

⁶⁷³ Athyal 1993: 60

5.4.2 Friendship and Hospitality

Besides peace and harmony, another element from the Indonesian cultures that can be used to sustain inter-faith dialogue is 'friendship and hospitality'. The three hundred and fifty different tribes and cultures have a similarity; central to their shared ethos is 'friendship and hospitality'. If someone visits his neighbour, he can only leave after having shared a drink or food offered. This is the evidence of hospitality and respect to each other which is common in all cultures in Indonesia. Based on this shared culture, inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia on whatever topic is still possible to be maintained through genuine friendship and hospitality.

Jesus' teaching also emphasised hospitality and it was proven in His ministry. Witnessing about Jesus' love to Muslims in Indonesia through dialogue will be more fruitful if all Christians in Indonesia realise this and were practicing 'a genuine friendship and hospitality to all their Muslim neighbours, and vice versa.

Athyal affirms that Asians' common cultural background is one of the advantages experienced by Asian missionaries to Asian people. He reports that they can easily share their faith experience with God to their neighbours, because they have some commonality: similar political experiences and social economic positions as the people to whom they witness. All of these things bring them together, minimise culture shock, and aid communication.⁶⁷⁴

The Christians in Indonesia must be open to visit their neighbours and vice versa, for the sake of harmony and peace in the community, but also for discipling the people who positively responded to the good news of Jesus. Being Jesus' disciples are not about what religion one practices, but how much he knows about Jesus, how much he loves Jesus, and how much he follows and practices His teaching. The Bible has recorded Jesus' teaching which is enough for the people in the world to know who He is, and what they must do to express their love to God.⁶⁷⁵ The Bible therefore, similar to the other 'holy

⁶⁷⁴ Athyal 1993:62

⁶⁷⁵ 2 Tim.3:16-17

books' in the world, must be opened for all people irrespective culture, religion and ideology. The Bible is the universal book that the students and scholars, the well educated or less educated, must read to know how they should live as Jesus' disciples in the community.

Nazir Ali categories this kind of dialogue as 'intra-Christian ecumenical dialogue': where a group of scholars from each side come together to discuss a certain theme, for the members to get a common understanding.⁶⁷⁶ Indonesian scholars on both sides of such dialogue, both the Persekutuan Intellectual Kristen Indonesia (PIKI) and Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI) are challenged for this task.⁶⁷⁷

In this context, I can agree with Travis' contextualisation model C5, yet disagree if the new believers, as followers of Jesus, still remain embracing the old traditions and ceremonies and only add Jesus as Lord and Saviour to their belief. This attitude, without a proper discipling, is just the same as leading the new believers into a new confusion, and slowly but surely they will be sinking into the wrong syncretism, and will never be truly Christ-like. They have to be taught in a friendly way to practice Jesus' teaching about living in Him, in His holiness, in His truth and in His humbleness. This is becoming Christ-like, socially and ethically; this is not Christianisation.

5.5 Inter-faith Dialogue In Campus Ministry

The goal of discipling ministry among the students at campuses is not replacing someone's religion with Christianity, but to lead someone to be closer to the knowledge of who Jesus is, so that in the long term, as a result of walking together on this road, they may have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Many of the students on campuses worldwide come from Jewish, Christian and Muslims backgrounds.⁶⁷⁸ For these three religious student groups, Küng

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Ali 1995:83 and this thesis 4.1.3

⁶⁷⁷ PIKI is the Indonesian Christian Scholars fellowship, and ICMI as Indonesian Muslim Scholars group.

⁶⁷⁸ Küng 2007:501

suggests that the 'trialogy of Abraham faiths' is the right topic to be discussed,⁶⁷⁹ while these three religions are also sharing a common ancestry. De Gruchy called this the 'family of Abraham'. As family of Abraham, De Gruchy comments, this indicates that there is considerable commonality between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, a sense in which they belong to each other and are mutually responsible for the justice and peace in the world.⁶⁸⁰

In his approach to inter-faith dialogue, Hans Küng believes dialogue can be more fruitful if it started from what he calls 'trialogue' between the three religions (Jews, Christian and Muslims). He believes that there can be no political peace without observing the religious dimension of political controversies - that is evident both in the Israel-Palestine conflict and in Iraq.⁶⁸¹ Küng sees the dialogue purpose of working towards political solutions as more important than the personal relationship between the people of different faiths. In this study, for the Indonesian context, before the students (Christians and Muslim students) come to conclusion about a certain political discussion, they need first to understand each other's religions as objectively as possible.

5.5.1 Understanding other Religions 'objectively'

Dialogue about religion among Campus students, must be set up in a free academic context and spirit. It means each person must be free from dogmatic exclusivism, fanaticism and confrontation. For the context of the Abrahamic religion, Küng proposes that for the dialogue to be fruitful, it must begin with the Jesus of the Jewish Christians.⁶⁸² He means that Jesus could be approached in dialogue by the three Abrahamic religions as a common ground: The Jews can look at the challenge of Jesus of Nazareth, the great son of Israel who, for the sake of God and human beings, relativised the absolute validity of descent...and proved himself to be a successor to Moses, even greater than Moses. For the Muslims, besides their strong stand on the oneness of God without association, they can also understand more comprehensively Jesus, the

⁶⁷⁹ Küng 2007:501

⁶⁸⁰ de Gruchy 2002:130

⁶⁸¹ Küng 2007:485

⁶⁸² Küng 2007:501

messenger, the Word, the Messiah of God who, according to the Qur'an, was elevated to God... as God's pointer, as God's friend and servant.⁶⁸³

I am in agreement with Küng, to begin dialogue with the common ground from the three religions, but I disagree with his term 'Jesus of the Jewish Christians'. On the contrary, Jesus must be free from any religion. He was a Jew, who was brought up among Judaism, but the Bible has no proof that Jesus had ever made a confession that He embraced Judaism as His religion. In fact, he was involved in the discussion with the Jewish teachers in the synagogue, but it does not mean that He was a member of Judaism. He was beyond Judaism. He declared himself as more than Abraham.⁶⁸⁴

His followers were called 'Christians', meaning 'belonging to Christ' or 'followers of Christ'. It does not mean that Jesus was Christian. Christianity as religion and Christian doctrines in history have been taught and spread to the world, based on the story of Jesus in the Bible, but there is no evidence that Jesus was making a confession that He was a Christian, or saw himself as founder of Christianity. The same applies to the Qur'an, where there are many stories about 'Isa ibnu Miriam', but there is not a single evidence that Jesus was a Muslim as many Muslims claimed. Jesus was from heaven, and he was going back to heaven, from eternity and going back to eternity. He is free from the 'boxes' of any religion. I am in agreement with Michael J. Reimer, when he was lecturing about *The quest of the historical Jesus* at the American University in Cairo. In his conclusion he stated "we also affirm that Jesus does not belong to Christians. His life, words and deeds, recorded in the gospel, have attracted spiritual inquirers of many different kinds".⁶⁸⁵ He does not need any religion, because He transcends the trappings of all religions. Religion is a systematic human made belief system, as a response to the Divine Being.

This understanding of religion must be introduced clearly to students to help them to have 'freedom' to think about any religion, and 'freedom' to discuss

⁶⁸³ Küng 2007:502-3

⁶⁸⁴ John. 8:58 (NIV)

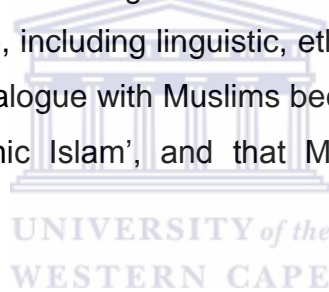
⁶⁸⁵ Reimer 2010:36

about any religion. Through this understanding, the students will be able to dialogue objectively, free from the walls of their respective religions.

5.5.2 A relational dialogue within campus activities

The Christian students at campuses must be involved in the various campus activities. They need to engage more with students from different faiths or different traditions to be involved in the same campus programs, including inter-religious dialogue. The dialogue movement may start from the Christian Student's group and be developed to engage with other students from different religions and ideologies. In this relational dialogue, there is no space for fear, arrogance, superiority or inferiority in respect of each other.

Youssef commented that one of the great mistakes Christians made in the past was ignoring Muslim culture, including linguistic, ethnic and sociological factors. Christians do not want to dialogue with Muslims because they are hiding behind excuses such as 'monolithic Islam', and that Muslims are resistant to the Gospel.⁶⁸⁶



Regarding the history of the Christian student's movement on campuses, one can learn from the Moravian mission movements' history in Germany in the 17th century. In that time, Howard wrote, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf launched what was one of the most effective and enduring missionary enterprises. Zinzendorf met Spener and Francke, the great leaders of the Pietists. He studied in the Paedagogium in Halle, Germany, where Francke met him. With five other students, they met together regularly in prayer. Howard reported that the purpose of this small meeting was to witness to the power of Jesus Christ, to draw other Christians together in fellowship, to help those who were suffering for their faith, and to carry the gospel of Christ overseas.⁶⁸⁷ This vision was carried over in his university days at Wittenberg and Utrecht.

⁶⁸⁶Youssef 1981: 657

⁶⁸⁷ Howard 1981:211

The emphasis was on a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Howard explained that this emphasis became the most influential factor in Zinzendorf's early life. Before the age of ten he had determined that his lifelong purpose should be to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. He never lost sight of this purpose. Howard concludes that the modern worldwide missionary movement was actually rooted in this Moravian initiative of 1732 which was born in the hearts of a group of students who joined together at Halle to pray for world evangelism.⁶⁸⁸

The other inspiring story about a student's movement is the one about Charles and John Wesley from England in 1726. Charles Wesley entered Christ Church College, Oxford, from which his brother John had just graduated. Because of his desire to know God better he formed a small society of students for the study of the classics and the New Testament. They became known as the "Holy Club" (in derision from their fellow students) and as the "Methodists" (because of their methodical approach to life).⁶⁸⁹ These two brother's ministry grew into what is now known as the Methodist Church. There are more examples of worldwide missionary movements with students as the first founders, while they were still studying at campuses.

The special thing to be highlighted from the students movements in relation to this thesis is that they always seem to start from their hearts' desire to know God better, to have a deeper personal relationship with God in Christ, and that they start with their fellow Christian students in a small group.

This amazing story of Christian students' movements unfortunately, according to Howard, has been declining since 1969. The reason was that the discussion of the world problems by students started replacing the emphasis on Bible study, evangelism, personal devotion and foreign missionary obligation, upon which the student movement was originally built. He explains further that the

⁶⁸⁸ Howard 1981:211

⁶⁸⁹ Howard 1981:211

contemporary students' movements are more involved in political and social matters, such as race relations, economic injustice and imperialism.⁶⁹⁰

Learning from the past Christian student movements, Howard suggests that Christian students ministry on campuses must again emphasize personal commitment to Jesus Christ on a lifelong basis; acceptance of the authority of the Word of God and personal Bible Study; a sense of responsibility to bring the gospel of Christ to the entire world in our generation; reliance on the Holy Spirit and student initiative and leadership to carry out these objectives.⁶⁹¹ He believes that Christian students can only be effective in relational dialogue with other students if they have a strong commitment to their Saviour Jesus Christ, and love others with their eternal wellbeing in mind.

The Indonesian context, obviously, is not the same as the original context of Francke and the Wesleys, who came from a mono-culture and were working among people of similar and shared western background. In plural contexts, such as Indonesia, the Christian students also need to be aware of the social issues surrounding them and engage with students from other religions, especially with their Muslim friends to find solutions. As Christian students, they must first study their Bible to understand what the Christianity offers as the solution to certain social problems, and listen also to the answers provided by other faiths. In this dialogue, the participants together try to find solutions, where all participants can have the same agreement or mutual understanding.

The Christian students' movement did not have to falter, if they had listened to what God says through the Bible, and asked God's guidance in relation to other faiths in dialogue. The social and universal issues in the inter-faith dialogue such as poverty, sickness, peace and justice, must be approached as universal issues, but the particular issues such as salvation in Christ, must be approached as particular issues. It can not be imposed on others. Let The Holy Spirit do His work in the heart of the student, but let the Christian students do their part to witness of Jesus' love for their student friends.

⁶⁹⁰ Howard 1981: 220

⁶⁹¹ Howard 1981: 221

5.5.3 Dialogue as witness

Youssef's criticism towards some Christians, such as their excuse about 'monolithic Islam', and the stereotype that Muslims are resistant to the Gospel, seems worthy of our attention. Indeed, the generalisation or intimidating terms such as 'fundamentalist', 'jihad' and 'extremism', may not be allowed to be an excuse not to witness to Muslims. As already explained earlier, to witness means to share a faith experience. In this dialogue each partner shares with the other and listens to the other.

Indonesia is, in fact, one of the countries where Islamic militancy has been on the increase during the past thirty years, besides Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Libya. After September 11th, 2001, it was discovered that some of the Muslim organisations in Indonesia were linked to world extremist Muslim organisations.⁶⁹²

Youssef agrees that Islamic militant movements are spreading all over the world. He explains that even though most Muslim nations are signatories of the UN's Universal Declaration on human rights, they always interpreted that declaration in a distinctive way. The reason is, since Islam, according to Muslims belief, is a total way of life, the people of a given nation are free under Islam and since God's law is above human laws and declarations, so therefore, whatever Islam says is right.⁶⁹³

What Youssef revealed about the Islamic view on God's law (Shari'ah) and its connection with Muslims, it underlines the fact, that wherever the Muslims are, other people sense a feeling of 'self-righteousness' and a spiritual superiority towards other faiths and a sense of being more perfect than others. This attitude, of course will be a stumbling block for maintaining a true dialogue. On the other hand, we see that there are many problems raised in many Muslim countries: civil war, poverty, power struggles etc. In such a context, according to Youssef, in the midst of struggle and anxiety in many Muslim countries, the

⁶⁹² Youssef 1981:658

⁶⁹³ Youssef 1981:658

Christian Gospel can be very attractive. He insisted that we should be watching for stress points in the ideological struggles of the Muslim world, rather than pulling our people out of such situations. He asserts further, that the Christians need to persevere as witnesses. He insisted that stress produces openness. He believes that restless hearts in search of meaning and peace are finding their rest in Christ.⁶⁹⁴ *

In dialogue with Muslims students, including those in Indonesia, Youssef suggests that the Qur'an be used as a bridge. He explains that Jesus did not preach Judaism and he never preached salvation through the law. Yet he never attacked the law. Rather he shows the Jews that the Law, in fact, is pointing to Him. He therefore suggests a similar way in which Christian students can use the Qur'an to study together as Christian and Muslims. Muslims take the Qur'an to be the direct word of God, and Christians should meet them where they are.⁶⁹⁵

He shows that the Qur'an contains many stories about Jesus, and that they all indicated that Jesus was the greatest prophet and in a special way close to God. He warned that this could not be called the 'Gospel in the Qur'an' but it nevertheless gives the Christian an excellent opportunity to talk to Muslims about Christ.⁶⁹⁶ He believes that the Qur'an can be used to bring Muslims to the feet of Jesus. He notes that all converts from Islam say that the God they knew distantly in the Qur'an they now know more fully in Jesus Christ. As Jesus and His apostles were able to point to the Gospel from the Old Testament, so we can point our Muslim friends to Jesus from the Qur'an.⁶⁹⁷

The question arising here is how many Christian students are really ready to listen to their Muslim friends, and how many Muslim scholars are really objective in their teaching of the Qur'an about Jesus? Both parties must have maturity, both mentally and spiritually, for the sake of peace and harmony through inter-faith dialogue on campus.

⁶⁹⁴ Youssef 1981:658

⁶⁹⁵ Youssef 1981:658

⁶⁹⁶ Youssef 1981: 659

⁶⁹⁷ Youssef 1981:659

Nazir Ali is right when he categories this kind of dialogue as 'intra-Christian ecumenical dialogue', where a group of scholars from each side come together to discuss a certain theme for the members to get a common understanding.⁶⁹⁸ The Indonesian scholars are responsible to uplift the humanity of all Indonesian, and they must work together with the government in building a real democracy in the country.

The Great Commission from Jesus to his disciples was not replacing any religions in the world, but to make people become Jesus' disciples by teaching them and through communion with Christ (the purpose of baptism). Indeed, in the discipling process, there is a space for dialogue between different religions and for discussion about the various issues from different perspectives. One point which should not be missing from the Christian perspective is to remember that faith without action is nothing; whatever you do, whatever you say, you do it for God's glory. Watch your life and your teaching, so no one can judge you as a disciple of Jesus Christ. In this matter it is not about how Christians pray or how they practice liturgy, but about how Jesus' love is real towards all people from different backgrounds.

5.5.4 Re-reading Acts 5:33-39 from inter-faith dialogue perspective: A new suggestion to Evangelical groups in view of mission to Muslims

In the early church's history, before Paul entered the scene, as reflected in the book of Acts, Jesus' disciples were facing great tribulations from the Jews, especially the Jewish leaders (the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin). The Jews' leaders wanted to stop Jesus' teaching and its effects on Jews socially, as spread by Jesus' disciples. They wanted to kill them, because for Judaism, the new 'religion', 'Christianity' was a false religion and a threat to their religion - Judaism. Gamaliel fortunately, with a humble heart, addressed the people to rethink what they planned, and what they thought about Jesus' followers. Gamaliel was one of the Pharisee leaders; he was an honourable person in the

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. Ali 1995:83 and this thesis 4.1.3

Jews community, a teacher of the law, and one of the members of Sanhedrin (the Judge of Religious Law).

He said: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men....Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”⁶⁹⁹

Since the rise of Islam, through the ages and up to this day, there has been hostility from Christians towards Muslims and vice versa. This has been reflected in the long history of colonialism in the two third world countries in the world. In the period after colonialism, there were still thousands of Christian missionaries who were sent out to the Muslim worlds for evangelism, to convert the Muslims to Christianity. In other words, the Christians in the world thought, in their ‘obedience’ to Jesus’ great commission (as much as they could understand the word) and to prove their love to Jesus Christ, wanted to stop Islam’s spreading, because to them, Islam was a false religion and a threat to Christianity. This is similar to how the Jews people looked at Christianity in the first century.

The same question needs to be addressed to Christians in general, and Christian students particularly to day, as the one Gamaliel addressed to his fellow Jews in his time.

In this context, the Christians are not called to combat Muslims, or any other faiths, but also not to encourage people to be Muslims. In Muslim evangelism, in relation to what Gamaliel suggested to his fellow Jews in the first century, evangelism is not about converting Muslims to Christianity or to force others to change religion. Christians are sent by Jesus Christ to the world, including to Muslims, to testify with love (sharing faith experience), what Jesus had done for mankind (and to me) through His living sacrifice on the cross. These messages can be spread through formal or informal dialogue, or by giving testimony in

⁶⁹⁹ Acts 5: 35-39

word and deed. The Holy Spirit will draw people to come to Jesus when Jesus' name is proclaimed.

Ferre concluded his book, the *Finality of Faith and Christianity among the world religions*, by stating that that our abiding task is to proclaim God's universal love in Christ in such a winning way that there shall be no false obstacles but every true inducement to its acceptance. He added that our task all over the world is to live our trust in God for all men, a trust that generates concern including for education and services.⁷⁰⁰ Ferre sees the education sector as a vital service in the community to express God's love.

Nehls and Eric again underlined in their book about working among Muslims that which makes inter-faith dialogue so significant, calling it 'the crux of the matter':

"If Jesus is not the Son of God, but only a prophet; if He is not part of the Trinity,... and if He did not die on the cross for sinners to reconcile them to God - then all Christians believe a lie. Then our Bible is, what the Muslims say, not the Word of God, the Truth, for the original Bible has been changed by men! Then we are still unsaved and face hell, because we believe something God never said! But if Jesus is the divine Son of God, if the Bible is the truth, because it is God's unchangeable word, and if Jesus died for us on the cross, then all Muslims are lost and face judgment and hell, because they refuse to accept God's offer of salvation."⁷⁰¹ This statement is of course a very sensitive theological issue on which the partners in dialogue are free 'to agree to disagree'. The mind change or conversion is not human work but God's work.

Hans Küng presented various topics (relating to Christianity and Islam) which may be suitable to be accommodated in student dialogue at campus ministry: e.g. Islam: a way of salvation; Muhammad: A Prophet? The Qur'an: God's word? Is there any revelation outside of the Bible?⁷⁰² The crucial question which

⁷⁰⁰ Ferre 1979:115

⁷⁰¹ Nehls and Eric 2002:1

⁷⁰² Küng 1986:22-29

needs to be debated in student dialogue is: *is the God of Islam the same as God of Christianity?* This dialogue can be hosted first by Christian students, and the next rounds can be hosted by Muslim students with different topics, relating to the first dialogue.

Besides those topics, the common assumptions between Christians and Muslims which were discussed in Birmingham in 1968, as Samartha quoted in his report, should also be brought into dialogue between Christian and Muslim students, such as: *the supremacy of God; the availability of his revealed guidance; the expectation of an afterlife; the definition of right and wrong; of truth and falsehood; the sanctity of family life and all life.* Those are the issues that Samartha insisted to be maintained in an increasingly agnostic world.⁷⁰³

If Islam is from God, there can be no other way better than “dialogue” to be implemented between the different religious people in the community, for better relationship and harmony among human beings. The world needs to know what Jesus had done, and what Jesus is busy offering to the poor and the outcast in the world. I believe that God’s mission through Jesus Christ (that every one may have eternal life in Jesus’ name) is still accessible to all people through inter-faith dialogue, irrespective what their religions are.

A dialogue about many issues in our societies and on our campuses should not exclude but rather include, also listening to God’s voice and calling, regarding the ultimate question such as *where this life is going to.* The Living God is the speaking God to the people beyond time and place.

5.6 Summarising and concluding perspective: "Love active in context"

Samartha’s contribution in maintaining inter-faith dialogue with his openness and commitment is ‘welcome’ to inspire the Christians in Indonesia to dialogue with their Muslim neighbours. This however, is not the total openness as in Samartha’s concept, to accept all the ‘truths’ from other religions to only prove

that the truth in Christian beliefs is the truth. The truth in Christianity is based on Christ Himself as the only Truth, the Way and the Life, and is not the same as the cultural truth in other faiths.

Love to Hindu neighbours in India is parallel to love for the Muslim neighbours in Indonesia as a main motivator to maintain inter-faith dialogue in a pluralist country such as Indonesia. In the special context with the ideology of Pancasila, the legacy of 'Pancasila and UUD 45' is still the main instrument to be considered for the Indonesian context. This ideology has proven in Indonesian national history to be a catalyst for unity and protector from any disunity or terrorism in the country. The continuation of inter-faith dialogue in Indonesia can only be maintained if Pancasila remains as the only national legal foundation of the country, and when all religions recognised this legacy to maintain their systems of belief in daily life.

Besides recognizing Pancasila, Indonesian Christians must advance their understanding of their Muslim neighbours. The Christians need to engage with their neighbours and be more 'open' to learn from and to listen to their neighbours about their faith experiences. In this learning process, all participants should be ready to listen to each other, and respect each other's belief and practices. This dialogue is expected to create more mutual understanding and mutual respect between different faiths in the community.

The necessity of contextualisation in communicating Jesus' messages in Indonesia remains one of the urgent tasks for Christian scholars in that country. That is very important to employ the proper discipling for the new believers to avoid a new syncretism and new confusion for the new followers of Jesus, which is called '*the insider movement*'. There are some biblical terms which still need to be re-translated into the Indonesian context, politically, historically and culturally. This re-translation can help to avoid misunderstanding about Jesus' message in the Bible by Muslim neighbours, and to minimise unnecessary tensions.

⁷⁰³ Samartha 1981:4

As part of their witnessing task in Indonesia, Indonesian Christians need to realise the universality of God and the particularity of Jesus' works. For Christians in Indonesia, this means accepting the fact that God is also working in all religions and traditions universally to enlighten the people about who God is, while recognising that God is also sovereign to make a particular way for the people to know and to come to Him. In honest dialogue, Christians will have to balance their belief in God's universality with their particular faith in God's work through Jesus' incarnation in which God meets His people face to face, and His people meet with God directly.

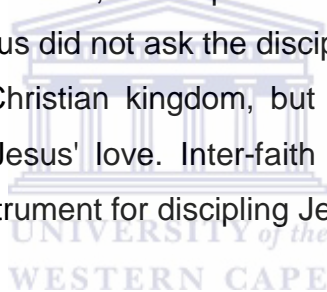
The story about Jesus can be told and heard in any community, including a university campus. The Christians' task is to share their faith experience with Jesus to their neighbours, without forcing others to be like them, or to replace another religion and proselytize others. On the other hand, that is a very fundamental human right for every one on this earth to hear and to learn about any religions, including learning the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christians were called to teach them who were ready to be taught to obey and to practice Jesus' words, no matter what their religious traditions are. The conversion in the people's heart to believe in Jesus Christ or not, is not a human decision, but God the Holy Spirit's work.

Similarly, at the campuses, the Christian students need to engage in such open dialogue with others students, to discuss the relevant issues in societies and campuses, to find a better understanding and work toward solutions. In academic settings which are free from dogmatic boundaries, the issue of religion can be discussed academically with appropriate respect to all religions and ideologies. In these discussions, the focus is not on who is wrong or who is right, but how religions agree or differ, and how they complement each other ethically.

Christian students, like any other Christians, are called also to make disciples at their campuses; to witness for the students who are willing to hear, and to teach the students who are willing to be discipled, no matter what their religious traditions are. In other words, for being a disciple of Jesus it is not necessary to

have 'a Christian religion'. Someone could be a good disciple of Jesus, while still being within another 'religion or ideology'. The Holy Spirit, sooner or later, can lead someone to the final decision, whether he or she wants to be baptised in the name of Jesus or not. Baptism is not a legal identity of being a Christian, but symbolises the unity of Jesus Christ and His followers. This event will be the next fruit of an intensive discipling.

Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations. All nations is referring to all ethnic entities (*panta ta ethna* – in Greek). It means, one nation or country can be having only one ethnic or mono culture, but one nation can also have more than one ethnic group, such as in Indonesia with many tribes, ethnic groups and cultures. All these ethnic entities have the right to know who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for mankind. Jesus commands his followers to teach them to obey what Jesus have taught them, and baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not ask the disciples to replace any religion in the world or to build the Christian kingdom, but to love the world, including Indonesian Muslims, with Jesus' love. Inter-faith dialogue, therefore, can be used as a medium or an instrument for discipling Jesus' disciples.



5.7 A practical model for interfaith dialogue in a pluralist context

Samartha's concept of 'Inter-Faith Dialogue' is mainly based on pluralism in Asia, and particularly India, with its predominant Hindu culture. This concept however cannot be separated from the debate about the Christian missionary approach to people of other faiths in the history of International Missionary Conference (IMC) and the World council of churches (WCC), since this organisation was founded in 1948.

After the long discussions, since 1938 (Tambaram), eventually in 1961 when the IMC merged with the WCC at the joint assembly in New Delhi, India, the formulation of the Christian approach to other faiths was changed to no longer mean 'to evangelise', but 'to witness'. This witness was understood as Christian dialogue with other people, where they are sharing their faith experiences with their neighbours, and where, at the same time, they listen to their neighbour's

faith experiences. Until this period of time, the idea of dialogue still had a space for the gospel to be shared to their neighbours through witnessing of their faith, even though the stressed point was no longer about the individual salvation, but the need for social change in the communities.

In 1968, since Samartha was appointed as director of the sub-unit for Dialogue (1971), the idea of dialogue moved into another direction. The Christian approach to other religions was no longer seen in the frame of witnessing their faith to others, but, as 'dialogue with people of other faiths', where the Christians and their neighbours can sit together to dialogue to solve the social problems in the community in the frame of social common humanity. If through this dialogue, conversion happened from one religion to another religion, it had to be accepted as the natural and legitimate result of true dialogue. Christian Mission as used by the western missionary in proselytizing people from other religions to Christianity is no longer relevant, as that kind of attitude is only one remnant of the arrogance of colonialism. So therefore, to witness of Christ to others which normally has been called 'evangelism', in a pluralist context should no longer take place in Christian mission, because this was just the same as proselytism and smelled of colonialism. At least, this is what was taught by Samartha and other Asian theologians in the ecumenical circles.

Triumphalism, as many Christian missionaries are still doing till today, according to Samartha is characterised by a crusading spirit which is dangerous to world peace, disturbs relations between people in multi-religious communities, and is disloyal to the very spirit of religion. He also avoided 'relativism' and 'syncretism' as the right response towards pluralism, but he did not realise that he also accommodated these ways in his concept of 'dialogue'.

As a concept which was mainly based on pluralism in Asia, and particularly the encounter with Hinduism in India, Samartha insisted that 'syncretism' (which he understood as 'integration') is not a danger at all; but, on the contrary, offered an opportunity for theological creativity. To him, syncretism is not an important issue on the agenda of the church in Indian Christianity.

This concept, of syncretism, of imaginatively integrating aspects from different traditions, is not totally relevant in the Indonesian context, because it was mainly based on the Indian traditions which are focused on Hinduism – a religion which accepts almost everything for the sake of peace.

In Indonesia, besides Christianity, there is Islam as main religion which is also monotheistic - the same as Christianity. There are Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Chinese religion) in small percentages, but both Christianity and Islam reject syncretism. So therefore, Pancasila as national ideology in Indonesian context which functions as political foundation to unite all of the diversities in the country: religions, ethnics, culture, and languages, must also function as filter towards all things from outside; including anticipating any religious teaching which is not supported by the Indonesian culture and core values.

In the Indonesian context which is predominantly Muslim, dialogue can be taking place in at least two forms: *firstly, inter-cultural dialogue or inter-tradition dialogue*. Inter-cultural dialogue or inter-tradition dialogue can be maintained to focus on the social common humanity, what the people need in the community irrespective what religion they have. The social issues can be tackled according to the tradition or cultures which are not directly related to any religion's doctrine. Each religious people must be involved to contribute to improving solutions for the people's needs in the community.

Secondly, inter-faith dialogue focuses on religious or faith issues, including some sensitive theological issues. This discussion can not be avoided in inter-faith dialogue between Christians and Muslims, both operating from monotheistic religious assumptions. This is the difference between the Indonesian and Indian context. Each religious group must be ready to listen to each other carefully, with respect and mutual understanding. It means, if the Christians give their testimonies about their faith experience to their partners, let their partners in dialogue also share their faith experiences, and let every one acknowledge and respect the diversity they discovered. In such dialogue will be seen fairness, mutual understanding and mutual respect.

The Christians take these opportunities as the time to understand their neighbours, but also as the time to see how God will use their testimonies to touch other people's hearts. Each partner in inter-faith dialogue, as neighbours, must respect the diversities, and can not impose any uniformity to each other. If anyone from other faiths, for instance from the Muslim side, wants to embrace Christian faith for any reason, or vice versa, he or she should have the choice in freedom, to totally change his or her religious tradition, or to remain in the old tradition with new faith perspectives as gained in dialogue. This kind of new believers must be taught in a proper discipleship as Jesus commands, to help him or her to choose either to become a new follower of Jesus or remain as part of the "Insider movement".

Learning from pluralism in the Indonesian context, there are two kinds of dialogue that Christians can understand and employ generally:

5.7.1 Dialogue in the "non- Muslim countries"

In the non-Muslim countries, Christians can be practicing 'inter-faith dialogue' as their approach to people of other Faiths without any restriction. I try to classify systematically this dialogue as *D1 to D4*. *D1* means the first step in dialogue (dialogue one); *D2*, means the second step in dialogue; *D3* is the third step, and *D4* is the forth step in dialogue.

D1: Witness in dialogue.

The Christians here *witness* to their neighbours freely by sharing their faith experience in Jesus. In this level, the Christians are reaching out to their neighbour and asking them if they want to hear their story. The Christian must be ready to help the neighbour in whatever they can do to help them in their needs. At this stage, the Christian seems more active in the conversation, to lead the partner to a personal encounter with Jesus, and develop a genuine friendship with love and care. The Christian here functions as 'the priest' to intercede for his dialogue partner but also intercedes for the community.

D2: Spiritual Dialogue

The Christian's presence here is more as a good listener than a good talker. In this dialogue, the Christian and his or her dialogue partner have opportunity to listen to each other about their spiritual experience, but the Christian is more active to listen to the dialogue partner, and ready to give the answer if there are any questions about faith in Jesus. Ali called this *spiritual dialogue*. In this dialogue, the purpose is not to find who is wrong or who is right, who is more spiritual or who lacks spirituality. This dialogue will show respect to each other and will be leading to personal reflection. Both sides are learning from each other by observing their partner's spiritual life.

D3: Religious Topical Dialogue

In this dialogue both sides are active in the religious discussion regarding the particular topic. In this inter-faith dialogue, both sides are in agreement to sit together to discuss a certain topic related to both religions. Nazir Ali called this dialogue '*infra Christian ecumenical dialogue*' - where the scholars from both religions discuss a certain topic together. In this dialogue, it is not necessary to find the same understanding of or agreement on a certain topic, but rather to enrich all members, both theologically and through spiritual knowledge. This kind of dialogue is the most Mukti Ali expected in Indonesia when he was still the minister of Religious Affairs. He called this "agreement to disagree".

D4: Common Humanity Dialogue

This dialogue is also called '*inter-cultural dialogue*': where Christians invite their neighbours to sit together to discuss the social problems in the community, and find out together the solution without touching any religious or belief issues. The conversation is focused on the human needs, relate to the situation in the community. Nazir Ali also called this '*dialogue to build up community*'. The Christians in this stage can function as 'salt' and 'light' to their neighbours.

5.7.2 Dialogue in the Muslim countries: From D4 to D1

In the Muslim countries where there are restrictions for the Christians to perform their religions, specifically to implement their mission, Jesus' Great Commission, they can start from *inter-cultural dialogue* and work towards *inter-faith dialogue* (D4 to D1), without promoting any name of religion. Action illustrating 'Jesus' love' must act louder than the verbal testimony about "Jesus' love". The Holy Spirit will take action for conversion (in the heart), and the Christian need to be more sensitive in following up the new believers (if any) who may prefer to only use the name "follower of Jesus" (while remaining in their own religion and tradition).

D4: Common humanity Dialogue

In this '*inter-cultural dialogue*', the follower of Jesus together with their neighbours discuss the social problems in the community, and find out together the solution without touching on any religion or belief systems. The conversation is focused on the human needs, related to the situation in the community. The follower of Jesus at this stage can function as 'salt' and 'light' to their neighbours by offering solutions without promoting any religion. Mukti Ali for Indonesian context called this dialogue *life and social dialogue*.⁷⁰⁴

D3: Religious Topical Dialogue

It means that both sides are active in the religious discussion regarding the particular topic. In this inter-faith dialogue, both sides are in agreement to sit together to discuss a certain topic related to both religions. This dialogue is closer to religious comparison. In this dialogue, it is not necessary to produce an agreement on a certain topic, but rather to seek enriching of all members, both theologically and spiritually. As Mukti Ali called this "agreement to disagree" (when necessary)..

⁷⁰⁴ Ali divided this kind of dialogue in Indonesian "dialogue kehidupan" and "dialogue kerja social". Cf. Daya and Beck (1992:209-210)

D2: Spiritual Dialogue

The follower of Jesus here acts more as a good listener than a talker. In this dialogue, both partners have opportunity to listen to each other about their spiritual experience, but the follower of Jesus is more active to listen to his dialogue partner, and ready to give the answer if any questions about his faith in Jesus arise. In this dialogue, the purpose is not to find who is wrong or who is right, who is more spiritual or who lacks spirituality. This dialogue will show mutual respect and will be leading to personal reflection. Mukti Ali suggests for the Indonesian context that this kind of dialogue can be called *Monastic dialogue*. In this dialogue, from both sides, Muslims and Christian clergies exchange their place (dormitory) for doing meditation, and a closer look of each dialogue partner's daily spiritual life style.⁷⁰⁵

D1: Witness in Dialogue

The follower of Jesus here witnesses to their neighbours by sharing their faith in relation to the questions that arise. In this level, the follower of Jesus is sharing his faith experience to the neighbour, and helping them in whatever need they can help. At this stage, a follower of Jesus needs to be more sensitive of his partners' new spiritual growth and active in teaching them towards a personal encounter with Jesus, especially when a new believer is cast out by his or her family because of his or her new faith in Jesus. The follower of Jesus must develop a genuine friendship with love and care. From this time onward, both the old follower of Jesus and the new one start to function as 'the priest' to intercede for others in the community.

John Travis' strategy about C4 and C5 (a follower of Jesus who are still "practising" Islam) can be accommodated in the Muslim context from D4 to D3, but the process must be continued to D2 and D1, where the Christians must actively teach the new believers how to be a true follower of Jesus.

⁷⁰⁵ Daya and Beck 1992:210; cf. Sinaga 2003:44

Christians must realise, that the Great Commission of Jesus is not promoting any religion, but to be 'Jesus' disciples' no matter what their religions and cultures are. Jesus Disciples can be still holding on a specific religion or culture or ideology, but by the Holy Spirit's teaching, he or she could become a true follower of Jesus, sooner or later. And yet, Jesus Christ never indicated to His followers that the great commission is more important than His great commandment, to love God and to love others with all their heart. (Mark 12:28-34).

In other words, Christian mission, in a broader understanding within 'inter-faith dialogue' is even more possible, as long as the followers of Jesus are still strong with their commitment to obey Jesus their Lord and Saviour. It is not necessary to expose Christianity as religion or to emphasise certain doctrines and religious ceremony to others. Living in the life of Jesus with love to every one, and in the prayer of Jesus, is the key to dialogue with neighbours irrespective what their religions and traditions are. So therefore, there is no closed country for the Gospel of Jesus. It might be closed for Christianity, but it cannot be closed for the love of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Christians must realise that they are only God's instruments to share about Jesus love to others, but they have no right to convert others to Christianity. Let God do His job as God, and let us do our tasks as human beings. Let the religions exist as religions, and Faith be expressed as Faith. The Christians should not worry if the world can not be converted to Christianity, because God is the only one who can convert people's hearts and make them to be His followers, according to His will.

Dialogue with people of other living faiths must be seen as more than common humanity, which is operated through listening and sharing. It is neither only for the sake of peace or to solve the social problems in the community. Inter-faith Dialogue must be also seen as an expression of love to build each other emotionally and spiritually, in responsibility to fellow human beings, nature and to God as Creator.

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