Chapter 5

An assessment of the Theology of Religions

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Motivation for the study

The world we live in is a pluralistic religious environment. Religions engage with one another on many different levels, ranging from individuals from different religious backgrounds sharing the same work and living space, to religious institutions having places of worship next to one another. The relationship between religions has been categorised over centuries, with scholars agreeing that there are traditionally three categories describing this, namely, (1) pluralistic, (2) inclusivistic and (3) exclusivistic (D'Costa 1986:18). There are also attempts to extend the categories to include alternative ways of describing the relationship between religions.

My departure point for this study will be intergroup threat theory. However, I only look at the theory in the first section, and then move on to other subjects relating to dialogue. I begin with threat theory as an argument for dialogue. In a world with different social dynamics and religions, we need to move past intergroup threat. There will never be peace and harmony in the world as long as different groups are suspicious of one another. However, dialogue is a very complex process. Therefore I will look at the

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different approaches to other religions and search for an approach which will promote dialogue and interreligious ecumenism.

The focus of this study will be on the exclusivistic paradigm. I will look at how the exclusivistic paradigm influences the way we relate to other religions in dialogue, and how the paradigm addresses the humanitarian problem which all nations face. Is this an effective way of dialogue and relating to other religious communities? In the first section we research whether intergroup threat is more common in exclusivistic communities and fundamental groups. If this is the case, I will search for alternatives to the exclusivistic approach. How can humanity work together for the better of humanity, despite their religious differences?

Research problem

Within the exclusivist paradigm adherents view their religion as the only true religion, and therefore also the only means of salvation (Knitter 2008:26). It is important to note that exclusivism is present in Christianity, Islam, Judaism and many other religions – it is not an exclusively Christian perspective. The problem is that in many cases other religions are viewed as inferior or invalid, and the religious views of the other are disregarded.

I am approaching this subject from a Christian perspective, which compels me to take a look at the central role that Jesus plays in our faith. What do Christians make of texts that state that Jesus is the only means of salvation? This is not something that we can ignore. We need to make a serious effort in working with these texts in a responsible way that allows for dialogue and even interreligious teamwork, so that the whole of humanity can benefit. Schillebeecxk (1990:50–51) says, '[*t*]he unshaken certainty that one continues to possess the truth oneself whilst other are mistaken are [*sic*] no longer a possibility.' As Knitter (2008:8) says, 'religions have to come together not to create a new singular religion, but to form "a dialogical community of communities".' This will never be possible if different groups are suspicious of the unknown 'other'.

The problem lies in the fact that all religions feel that they are the only true religion. Citing Scripture is not a way to address this problem, because the truth of Scripture is relative. Christians only regard the Bible as the Word of God, and disregard any other scriptures. In the same way, Islam and Judaism disregard the scriptures of other religions. The issue is much more complex than merely throwing scripture at it. The Bible does have authority when it comes to the convictions of Christians, but in a multireligious setting we have to accept that other religious scriptures would also be used, and that they have authority for the followers of that particular religion. (When I discuss comparative theology, we will see that comparing scripture might be one of the approaches that can help overcome this problem.) How can we expect that one of these scriptures should be used as the norm?

We must accept and acknowledge the plurality of scriptures, because it is never going to change (Hick & Knitter 1987:69, 77–78). We need to find an alternative approach, which might lie in dialogue. But how do you do dialogue in a respectful way, without trying to force your views on the other, if both feel that they possess the only truth and means to salvation? I will try to determine if there are guidelines that can assist us in dialogue to enable us to cooperate, rather than trying to manipulate the other to accept our faith or religious views.

A further question that we need to consider is whether we can learn from one another. Is there any value in the other which can help us improve our knowledge of ourselves, and even our faith? Does an approach to learn from and help other religions not contradict the great commission that we have received?

The fact remains, religious pluralism is here to stay. We will always be confronted with other religions and other world views. We have to take a serious look at how we are going to relate to one another, because we are exposed to the other and the foreign on a daily basis at work, school, and even social gatherings. We need to figure out a way in which we can relate to other religions (Knitter 2008):

> Above all, there has been a growth in the sentiment that religious plurality needs to be taken account of in our changed historical circumstances. What the Muslim could say and think about the Christian and Jew in a former age no longer seems adequate. What Christians once said to dismiss summarily the claims of Islam needs similarly to be re-examined, above all in the light of experience that reveal the grace and the truth present in our Muslim neighbours. (p. 3)

Thus, my research problem is how we enter into religious dialogue in a respectful way, without hidden agendas, so that both parties will benefit. We need to determine guidelines for dialogue that both parties can agree upon, and find a way in which we can enter into dialogue despite our different faith convictions.

Hypothesis

I will look at what the view of the exclusivist approach is, as well as how it is influenced by fundamentalism. Furthermore, I will look at what dialogue is and how we can effectively enter into dialogue with the purpose of working together. I will propose working with a theocentric approach rather than Christocentric approach, which might lead us to an interreligious ecumenism. If we can find a way to look past our religious differences, then we might be able to work together for the benefit of humanity. I will evaluate past approaches and attempt to find those that might be more open to the religious 'other'. I feel that this is a contemporary problem due to the obvious evidence that different

groups (social as well as religious) experience intergroup threat. In an article (Van Gelder, *Time Magazine,* 26 June 2015) that I refer to it will become clear that this is not only a problem which other countries face, but one that is also present in South Africa.

Method

The method that I use is a purely literary study. I specifically look at the works of Paul Knitter, as he pays a lot of attention to exclusivism and its influence on dialogue. He also proposes and defines the acceptance model. Then I look at the work of D'Costa, and the new approaches (comparative theology and postmodern postliberalism) which he proposes, which I will investigate and evaluate as alternative approaches to other religions. Furthermore I will look at Hicks' proposal to move from a Christocentric to a theocentric approach in Christianity. I will also look at Sweet's proposal and definition of interreligious ecumenism. The method will be a critical evaluation of the exclusivistic approach and a search for alternative ways of relating to other religions. Thus, I will conduct a critical, evaluative study of research that has already been conducted.

My research approach is from a theological departure point, and uses a quantitative method. Qualitative research is exploratory research to understand reasons, opinions and motivations. It provides insight for quantitative research. Quantitative research is a way of qualifying a problem by generating data that can be transformed into statistics. It is used to qualify opinions, attitudes and behaviour.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to show that dialogue is critical with regard to the intergroup threat theory. I will define exclusivism, fundamentalism and dialogue, and then investigate if the exclusivist model leaves room for dialogue, and what dialogue according to this model will look like. If it does not leave room for dialogue, I will examine the reasons for it and what we need to change in order for dialogue to be possible. I will then try to suggest alternative approaches that we can follow for dialogue to be possible.

Expected results

The result that I expect to find is not only a way for the exclusivistic model to enter into dialogue, but also definition of guidelines on how this dialogue will be conducted. Apart from that, I also want to propose alternative ways of relating to other religions, as well as the possibility of working together despite our religious differences and contradictory faith convictions. I also expect to describe the possibility of a theocentric approach to religions, which would make interreligious ecumenism possible.

Group threat theory

Society is made up of different social groups, each with their own group dynamics. Recently there have been a lot of studies (i.e. Ryan King, Darren Wheelock, Mark McCormack) on how these groups influence each other. In a global world it soon became apparent that groups would experience threats from other groups. This theory is called group threat theory. In this section I briefly look at what group threat theory is, and discuss the dynamics that lead to group threat. I also discuss the two types of threats described by Stephan, Ybara and Morrison (2009). Different factors are responsible for different reactions and consequences, which will become clear throughout this section. The consequences of these threats lead to discord in societies. I therefore examine a short theory of a possible solution to the threats, which might enable us to build a society with more trust between groups.

Seeing that this chapter is about interreligious dialogue, I then move from a definition of intergroup threat theory to religious intergroup threat theory, where I explain threat as experienced in different religions. I will look at the relationship between Christianity and Islam as an example of the extent of and reasons for the threat experienced between religious groups. In the section about religions intergroup threat it will become clear how closely the religious intergroup threat is linked to exclusivism and religious fundamentalism. The link between threat and lack of knowledge will be clarified, and it will be explained how Christians misunderstand Muslims, and vice versa.

To conclude this section I will refer to an article published in *Time Magazine* (Van Gelder, 26 June 2015), which shows clearly how group threat is present in South Africa, even though it is not reflective of religious intergroup threat theory in South Africa.

What is intergroup threat theory?

We live in a pluralistic world with different religions, races and ideologies, each forming their own social groups with their own group identities. These groups also have certain criteria for being part of this group. This means that some are included whilst others are excluded. Those included share in benefits only available to those who belong to the in-group. Benefits would normally be acceptance and social support with rules, norms, values, et cetera. We want to belong to these groups, and we fear the destruction thereof. This provides people with tradition, language, culture and religion. Because people's own groups are so important, other groups are considered a threat (Nelson 2009):

> 'Tribes' that possess the power to harm or destroy the in-group are a threat to the very existence of the in-group, while 'tribes' that possess different values are a threat to the unified meaning system of the in-group. (pp. 1–2)

Intergroup threat is when one group experiences the feeling or reality that the other will cause them harm. There are two types of threat, namely, (1) *realistic threat,* which refers to physical harm or a loss of resources, and is a threat to the group's power, resources and general welfare and (2) *symbolic threat,* which is the threat to one's identity, values or integrity, religion, beliefs, et cetera. As Nelson (2009:2, 4) states, '[*t*] he primary reason intergroup threats are important is because their effects on intergroup relations are largely destructive.' Threat can also be experienced as individuals. Individual realistic threats would refer to pain, torture, death and economic loss, whilst individual symbolic threat refers to a loss of honour, identity or self-esteem (Nelson 2009:2, 4).

One factor in intergroup threat is the threat to the power of a group. Low-power groups are more likely to experience this threat, but high-power groups would react more severely to the experience. Another aspect are cultural dimensions, as cultural values can influence the experience of threat. People living with a strong community concept of culture may be especially prone to intergroup threat. 'Tight' cultures emphasise the importance of conforming to group norms and values, and will therefore experience higher levels of threat. As Nelson (2009) states:

> In the case of cultural dimensions, the underlying premise is that some cultures may predispose people to feel threatened by out-groups, particularly those cultures that emphasize close ingroup ties (a specific aspect of collectivism), rules and hierarchy which may be jeopardized by out-groups (uncertainty avoidance, tightness, power distance, and mistrust, security/low benevolence). (p. 6, pp. 9–11)

The intergroup threat has a number of consequences:

1. *Cognitive responses.* Intergroup threat changes the perceptions of the out-group and establishes new stereotypes. It will lead to ethnocentrism, intolerance, hatred and so on. Communicative and memory biases are amplified by the experience of threat, which will lead to negative descriptions of the out-group and misantrophic memory errors. The in-group will especially remember *negative* behaviour by the out-group. Attitudes toward the in-group would become more favourable, which would increase the feeling of threat. This response makes violence against the out-group more likely, and easier to justify (Nelson 2009:16–18).
2. *Emotional responses.* These responses include fear, anxiety, anger and resentment. It will result in a loss of empathy for out-group members, but an increase of empathy for the in-group members. Studies show that these feelings can evolve to feelings of *Schadenfreude,* which means a group or person takes pleasure in the suffering of the out-group. Different out-groups can also induce different emotional responses. Gay men may threaten a straight man's values, which might result in disgust, whilst another ethnicity may induce fear and hatred because the experience induces realistic threats (Nelson 2009:18–19).

3. *Behavioural responses.* These responses can range from withdrawal to discriminating, lying, stealing and harassment. In some cases this response can result in hostility toward the out-group. It can also lead to negative reactions within the in-group, such as an increase in in-group norms and boundaries; 'Indeed, threats to the ingroup's status and core values have both been found to trigger derogation of deviant group members' (Nelson 2009:20–21).

The nature of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses may depend on whether the threat is realistic or symbolic. Symbolic threats will lead to dehumanisation, delegitimation, moral exclusion, and so on and more than likely lead to an increase in in-group boundaries, and conformity to rules and values. Realistic threats might lead to withdrawal, avoidance and aggression, whilst more drastic responses may include strikes, boycott or even warfare (Nelson 2009:22–23).

Reducing threat

So far I have referred to the editor of the book, Todd D. Nelson (2009); the chapter on 'Threat Theory' was written by Walter Stephan, Oscar Ybarra and Kimberley Morrison (2009). I came across this chapter's draft version, which Walter Stephan and Marisa Mealy wrote (2011), in which they referred to possible ways of reducing threat and responses to threat. I shortly discuss their proposed solution as it refers to dialogue, which is also my personal approach to the problem.

Realistic group threats, according to Stephan and Mealy (2011), can be reduced by declarations of peace and prosecuting those that commit crimes against humanity. Leaders should come together and renounce violence and hatred, and engage in civil public discourse or dialogue. They should also establish verifiable steps toward promoting intergroup peace. To address symbolic threat offensive symbols must be outlawed and the leaders must undertake media campaigns to promote peace and reconciliation. Media should also provide fact, accurate reporting on any incidents that could be interpreted as actions from the out-group (Stephan & Mealy 2011:5). The key to maintaining peace and reconciliation is dialogue between the different groups, but as it will become clear in the remainder of the chapter, dialogue has many elements and is a complex process. My approach or departure point to the subject is interreligious dialogue.

Religion and intergroup threat theory

In this section I look at the work of McCormack (2012), who wrote his thesis on religion and in-group threat theory, based on studies about the situation in America. Even though the study wasn't conducted on intergroup relations in South Africa, analysis of the data is

relevant to the situation in South Africa. McCormack (2012:1) says that religious freedom made great progress in America, but only amongst Protestant groups. Minority religions such as Muslims and Jews still experience negative attitudes. His study primarily focuses on the relationship between Christians and Muslims (McCormack 2012:1–2).

America used to be extremely anti-Catholic, as the Catholics' loyalty to the Pope was seen as a threat to their familial structure and political stability. Americans experienced a symbolic threat by Catholics, Mormons and Freemasons because they felt that their values were in danger. Muslims are currently seen as the biggest threat to Christians as they challenge Christians' fundamental teaching about Christ (McCormack 2012:3–4).

McCormack (2012) argues that religious groups such as Evangelical Protestantism and other fundamentalist groups often provoke religious prejudice:

> Significant advancements have been made in examining individual theological belief systems and religious worldviews and their relationship to prejudice. Merino examined the relationship between theological exclusivism and views of religious diversity and willingness to include non-Christians in social life, finding theological exclusivity to be strongly and negatively associated with views of religious diversity generally and strongly associated with a decreased willingness to include non-Christians in the life of the community. (p. 6)

For Christian communities the experience of threat is normally connected to their identity – they feel that their values and ideologies are disintegrating or being challenged. These feelings are a response to a decrease in young people in churches as well as the exclusion of Christianity in the public sphere (both also visible in South Africa). They experience threat to their in-group due to the loss of Christian influence in society (McCormack 2012:16).

The threat of the religious other

McCormack focuses his study on Christians' experience of the threat of the religious 'Other', which is based on the presence of Muslim communities. Participants of the study feel that Muslims hate Christians and seek to subvert American society (McCormack 2012):

> Assumptions about the actions and intentions of Muslims are often of a subversive, conspiratorial nature, placing them in direct opposition to the dominant American culture and to the long-standing American values of democracy and freedom. Muslims are 'all terrorists' and 'all hate us', as one resident suggested. (p. 19)

Obviously, these statements are assumptions about the Muslim community, which are not based on any facts. These views are based on two qualities: Violence and autocracy. Many people view Muslims as a violent community. The root of Muslim violence was viewed as embedded in the religion of the Muslim community (McCormack 2012):

> Important to note in these depictions of Muslim violence is that residents frequently made *claims to knowledge* of central Islamic teaching and practises – residents presume to 'know' about Islam ... Thus, there is a pervasive sense of 'knowing' about Muslims, though such claims were rarely, if ever, substantiated by textual or otherwise authoritative sources of knowledge. Further, this 'knowing' most commonly centred around perceptions of the violent nature of Muslims. (pp. 20–21)

Muslim culture is viewed as dramatically different and opposed to Christian or American culture. Participants then try to explain what life could turn into if Muslims are not resisted (McCormack 2012:22). It becomes clear why the in-group Christians view the out-group Muslims as a threat, and it seems that it is more of a symbolic than a real threat. But Americans or Christians are not the only groups that experience threat, and that is what threat theory is all about.

Nelson (2009) views in-group threat from the Muslim perspective. McCormack viewed interreligious relations and intergroup threat from a Christian fundamentalist position and Nelson from a Muslim fundamentalist position. In the last two decades no other group has been responsible for more international acts of terrorism than militant Muslim fundamentalists. Although there are many different reasons for this, one basic reason integrates them all: They feel threatened by Western culture. Muslim culture is collectivistic, culturally tight, and mistrusting of the out-group. Western culture is dramatically different from this, which threatens fundamental Muslims (Nelson 2009):

> Fundamentalist Muslims are deeply concerned about the continued existence of the culture in its traditional form. Acts of terrorism is a response of the fundamentalist Muslim community to these threats, which in turn leads Western Christian communities to respond likewise. (p. 12)

It is clear how a lack of understanding of the religious *other*, as well as a fundamentalist point of view, can put interreligious relations under stress. Mixed with assumptions, it creates the perfect circumstances for intergroup threat and mistrust of the religious other. It becomes clear how important it is to address interreligious dialogue, and the need to find a new approach to relate to other religious communities.

Reflection on *Time* article of 26 June 2015

On 26 June 2015 *Time Magazine* published an article 'How a right-wing South African group incites a new wave of white fear' (Van Gelder 2015) that demonstrates how this intergroup theory functions perfectly in South Africa. It refers to an American young man who was involved in a mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charlestown in the United States of America. The article states that this young

man felt that his way of life was under threat from people of colour. He did not have any relation to South Africa, but shares the ideology of white primacy held by many white persons worldwide. The article then looks at communities and more specifically at the community at a camp for young white South Africans where it is taught that separation between white and black must be maintained.

The article tells the story of a group of young boys who went on a holiday camp aimed at the survival of white South Africans. The boys are all white and Afrikaans-speaking. In the article Eliria Bornman of the University of South Africa explains that their actions are a response to their new position in South Africa. Many of these boys as well as the white community feel unsure about their place in the new South Africa. They have a strong sense of identity and are filled with a lot of anger – anger which is fuelled by positive discrimination. Discrimination and the threat of not finding work due to the colour of one's skin is a realistic threat experienced by in-group members.

Komandokorp, the group that leads these survival camps, is a dangerous and extreme right-wing group whose mission is to protect its own people (white and Afrikaans) against the attacks and threat of black South Africans. Sixty per cent of boys that attend are volunteered by their parents, whilst the other 40 volunteered themselves. The *Komandokorps* feeds on anxiety. Crime and violence in South Africa breeds fear, which is fertile ground for an organisation such as the *Komandokorps*. Jooste, the leader of this camp, is desperate to preserve the Afrikaner identity through its language, culture and symbols.

This article clearly reflects the in-group threat of white communities, which is also reflected in recent events in South Africa. Statues have been destroyed and dishonoured, racism and hate speech abound. People that are often in the news are people like Julius Malema, Sunette Bridges, and Steve Hofmeyr, characters described by many as racists. However, these are people that understand the in-group threat, and act on it. In-group threat theory says that a group's values and identity are important to the group, and these images are used to draw the group closer together. Steve Hofmeyr recently released a new song called *We will survive* which is full of images of Afrikaner identity:

Daar is 'n land en 'n volk, in een taal gedoop,
Met gebeure en buskruid en bloed verkoop,
Wat weer en weer van sy knieë af moet streef,
Ons sal oorleef

[There is a land and a nation, baptised into one language,
Bought with events and gunpowder and blood,
That will rise to its knees again and again,
We will survive].

He also includes religious imagery:

Ek lig my oë, tot die berge op,
Waar sal my hulp tog vandaan kan kom,
Ag my God, jou woorde lê deur my geweef,
Ons sal oorleef

[I lift up my eyes to the mountains,
Where would my help come from?
Oh my God, your word is entwined in me,
We will survive].

Steve Hofmeyr uses the imagination and identity of the white Afrikaner in his song in order to show the white South Africans who experience perceived or real threats that he is on their side. My aim is not to focus on intergroup threat theory or the Afrikaner experience of threat, but to demonstrate that all communities experience threat. It is common to the whole of humanity.

I believe that dialogue is the way to move past the experience of threat in a community that is diverse but trusts one another. Dialogue is a complex process with many different elements. Here I search for possible approaches to interreligious dialogue. I look at past approaches to other religions and dialogue, and propose alternatives.

I first explain exclusivism and the view of exclusivistic approaches to other religious communities, and then look at the link between exclusivism and fundamentalism. Then I will examine what dialogue is and how we can work towards more effective dialogue. My argument is that the traditional threefold approach of the past is not effective, and this leads me to search for alternative approaches. If we can find an approach for dialogue that can accept the other for who they are and make room to work together for the better of society, we will be able to work past misconceptions and misunderstandings, fostering trust, which will enable different faith communities to work together for the benefit of the 'other'.

Defining exclusivism

I will now seek to define what is meant by the term 'exclusivism'. To do this I will look at the origin of exclusivism, as well as arguments for and against it, in order to determine whether exclusivism leaves room for dialogue or not. As my departure point is that of Christian theology, I will look at exclusivism as a paradigm from a Christian departure point. I will also distinguish between total replacement and partial replacement. The total replacement approach is of the opinion that there is only one true religion, which must replace all religions (Knitter 2008:23, 26). Partial replacement says that God does reveal himself in other religions, but salvation is only available through Christ (Knitter 2008:33, 36).

The exclusivist approach

The departure point of the exclusivist approach is that Christianity possesses the absolute truth (Knitter 2008:26; Netland 1991:9), any truth claim by any other religion is false and misleading. It is of the opinion that God revealed himself in the Bible, and that Jesus is God incarnate. No salvation is possible without Christ, and therefore no other religion can bring about salvation (Netland 1991:9). Because of humanity's inherently sinful nature there is very little good and limited knowledge about God in other religions. Jesus is the only way to salvation, and therefore we are obliged to do mission work. There must be a call on all people to turn from their sinful lifestyles, to repent, and to make a conscious decision to confess in the name of Jesus (Meiring 1996:229). It is very important to note that the exclusivist approach is not only present in the Christian tradition, but also in many other religions. Most people regard their own religion as the only truth (Netland 1991:35).

Total replacement model

The total replacement model feels that Christianity should replace all other religions. Mission work was always done with the intention that all people should become Christians. God's love is universal, but it is only realised through Christianity. This view is especially found in fundamentalist or evangelical communities (Knitter 2008:19). As I have mentioned, the total replacement model views other religions as so lacking and deviant that Christianity must replace them (Knitter 2008:23).

Kraemer (1938) and many others who support his perspective feel that salvation is only possible through the grace of God (D'Costa 1986:57; Kraemer 1938:101). This approach is strongly based on biblical texts, and holds that texts such as John 14:6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me', should be viewed in a serious light. Another verse that is very important is Acts 4:12, '[*a*]nd there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given amongst men, by which we must be saved.' According to these two texts Jesus is the only Saviour and truth about God is only revealed through Jesus. Therefore Christians have the responsibility to preach this message to the world. This proclamation of the message should be done in the context of the people to whom we take the message. The Christian truth should be brought to them in their own language, and according to their culture and understanding of reality. Kraemer proposed that any truth claim should be evaluated in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus (D'Costa 1986:57, 70; Kraemer 1938:107).

Karl Barth played a large role in establishing the viewpoint of the replacement model. Barth experienced the evils of World War II, and believed that humans couldn't get their act together without God (Knitter 2008:24). His message was based on four principles (Knitter 2008:23–25), namely:

1. We are saved by grace alone. We live in a violent suffering world, and we cannot get out of this mess without God. The only way we will get out of it, is through a higher power, grace.
2. We are saved through faith alone. We are unable to change the world or our circumstances on our own; we need to trust God to help us. Faith alone, and not human acts, could change this situation.
3. We are saved by Christ alone. It is in Jesus Christ, and only in him, that God has acted in this world. It is only through love that God has saved us and sent his Son, not because humanity deserves it.
4. We are saved by Scripture alone. The Scriptures communicate the reality of Jesus Christ to us. It is the truest revelation that we will ever find. Through Scripture God tells humans that he is God.

Barth on religions

When we look at Barth's view of religions, it is clear that he does not view Christianity as superior to other religions; for him all religions are unbelief (Knitter 2008:25). It is a human, manufactured attempt to anticipate what God wills us to do, which replaces God's work. Religion prevents humans from doing what humans must do, and that is to step back and allow God to be God. All religions, including Christianity, are the opposite from what they appear to be; rather than through religion, we are saved through grace (Knitter 2008:25). Barth warns against comparing Christianity with other religions, not because of the differences but because all religions are the same. Nothing differentiates Christianity from any other religion. Still, he proclaims Christianity as the one true religion, reason being that Christianity knows that it is a false religion. But because of Jesus, saving us through grace, Christianity is the only true religion. Christianity is the only religion that contains the revelation of God. Barth therefore says that Christians should respect religious freedom, but because Christianity is the only religion with the revelation of God, Christianity has nothing to relate to other religions, and therefore dialogue is impossible. He also warns missionaries not to try and find points of contact with other religions, but only to approach them in a loving way and let the light of God shine in (Knitter 2008:26).

Theological view of the total replacement model

This model feels that all Christians should take the New Testament seriously, especially concerning Jesus as the only means of salvation. Without him, humans cannot get out of their sinful existence. Any view that would move away from this message is watering down and abandoning the gospel of Jesus, not reading the Bible literally. Despite this view, they are hesitant to declare that anyone that has not heard and therefore does not follow Jesus, would be condemned. They believe that the Bible is not the only source of

this view, but also our own ability to reason. For the total replacement model it is then reasonable that God will provide only one, singular path through which humans can be saved (Knitter 2008):

> So Geivett and Phillips reason that in the midst of so much uncertainty, unclarity, and fear, in the face of so many different and doubtful ways to go, doesn't it make immanent sense that, if there is a God, this God would provide us with a clear set of directions, a sure helping hand, an assurance that within and beyond the uncertainties, there is purpose to life and a well-defined path to walk toward it? ... What human beings need is one clear, God-given path! (pp. 27–30)

A God-given revelation of this one truth stands above any human-made system. Leslie Newbigin (1989) states that:

> [*T*]o affirm the unique decisiveness of God's action in Jesus Christ is not arrogance; it is the enduring bulwark against the arrogance of every culture to be itself the criterion by which others are judged. (p. 169)

Despite their view, they do not want to argue based on the Bible alone – they want a chance to share the gospel, convinced that through the power of God salvation through Jesus alone will be revealed and proved to each person. The total replacement model wants an opportunity, or competition, where all religions share their convictions. They are convinced that God will then prove their message as the only truth (Knitter 2008:31).

Partial replacement model

The partial replacement model views the total replacement model as too harsh. Exponents feel that there is some value in other religions, and that they can communicate the love of God, '[*i*]n fact, their basic criticism of the Total Replacement Model is that it missed the very real presence of God within the world of other religions' (Knitter 2008:33). However, there is still no salvation in other religions. The goal of dialogue is then to be able to understand other religions better in order to replace them. This model celebrates the revelation of God in other religions. God is present within the persons and the structures of other religions. According to them there are three ways in which God reaches out to people in other religions, namely, (1) the first chapter of Romans states that God speaks to others through the power of nature, and through their own conscience, (2) confirming that the power of nature speaks the language of God, Paul says to the Gentiles that God has not left them without a witness to do good and (3) the same Word that created everything became flesh in Jesus, and now gives life to everyone (Knitter 2008:33–34).

Various theologians

Early church fathers believed that God not only speaks in Christianity. Both Calvin and Luther believed that a 'sense of God' was instilled in humans, which drives people

to seek God. Tillich (1963:4) said that people feel the presence of God when 'they are grasped by an Ultimate concern' – the answer to the question of the meaning of life. Pannenberg (1968:3–21) said that the process of history is the stage for God speaking to humanity. We become aware of God through our search for questions and the events of history. For him, the history of religions is the history of God's interaction with humanity (Knitter 2008:34–35).

Kraemer on religions

Kraemer has a similar view of other religions as Barth. He agrees that Christianity is the only true religion, and also makes a distinction between religion and faith. Despite this, Kraemer says that God without a doubt reveals himself in other nations and their religions. His position towards other religions is based on categorising religions into two groups: The prophetic religions and the natural religions. His view of other religions, according to some, can seem as if Kraemer views religion as simply a product of man. Kraemer himself admits that he made too little of God's presence in other religions (Beyers 2001:93–94).

When Kraemer speaks about natural religions, he also calls them primitive religions. By primitive he does not mean that the followers are primitive, only that they do not make a distinction between religious life and secular life. All aspects of life are connected. These religions seldom change and are not affected by outside elements, he describes them as static and isolated. They do not have any vision of spreading their message, their only goal is to sustain the present order. Within these religions there is no notion of ethical or religious absolutes. In the prophetic religions there is a strong awareness of God and the need to proclaim their beliefs. These religions are dependent on God for their revelation; here we find sin as the will of man, which opposes the will of God, and followers have the godly commission to spread its divine truth. When Kraemer speaks about primitive religions he does not mean that other religions are more evolved or superior, and feels that this would prevent any efforts to enter into dialogue. When natural religions come into contact with prophetic religions, it is no problem for the former to take up beliefs from the latter. Natural religions tend to view all religions as the same (Beyers 2001:94–95).

When Kraemer speaks about the relationship between religions he becomes more negative. In his book *Godsdienst, godsdiensten en het Christelijk geloof* (1958) it is clear that he approached the subject from a Christian point of view. He says that the study is from the departure point that Jesus is the way, the truth and the light. He is convinced that Christianity is the only true religion, that salvation and revelation are only found in Jesus, and that only in Jesus are we able to interpret the total religious history of humanity. Christianity contains all answers to salvation and therefore salvation is only available within the Christian religion (Beyers 2001:95–96).

Kraemer makes a distinction between religion and revelation, classifying religion as that which humans think about God, and revelation as that which God thinks about humans. This is his departure point when he talks about the relationship between religions. Revelation is the self-revelation of God by God alone. Jesus is this revelation, and all religious history of humans must be interpreted in and through Jesus. Revelation and salvation isn't one package, according to Kraemer. Salvation is only available in Jesus, but God reveals himself to other religions as well. This view is based on his understanding of God's eternal covenant with all of humankind. Kraemer and Barth have different opinions about God in other religions: Kraemer says that God can and does work in other religions, whilst Barth rejects this view. Kraemer says that salvation comes as an answer to revelation, and this answer is faith in Jesus Christ. Other religions are present because of human, sinful attempts at trying to relate to God instead of meeting the answer of faith (Beyers 2001:98–99).

Still, Kraemer argues for a more positive attitude towards other religions in order to keep the possibility of dialogue and contact open. Kraemer has a more positive approach to other religions than most researchers with an exclusivistic approach: He says that God still relates to other religions because of his eternal covenant. Thus Kraemer allows some room for other religions (Beyers 2001:100).

Theological view of the partial replacement model

God speaks to other people through their own religions. Other religions not only make people aware of the divine, but also teach them that the divine is a personal and loving being. This evangelical model sees other religions as God-willed, because humans need redemption but are unable to redeem themselves. Through other religions, God leads them to the search for him. However, they still feel that there is no salvation in other religions, like what we find in Christianity. This argument is based on two reasons, outlined below.

1. The New Testament nowhere states that someone can be saved through the general revelation of God. Salvation is brought by Jesus alone. God's action of reaching out to humans became reality in and though Jesus (Knitter 2008:35–37). Carl Braaten (1992:74) said that, 'Christ is not merely *expressive* of a divine salvation equally available in the plurality of religions; salvation is constituted by the coming of God in the concrete history of Jesus of Nazareth.' Exponents feel that we would contradict what Christ is all about if we should allow for other means of salvation. Therefore, for anyone to be saved they have to come into contact with Christ, which they do when Christ is preached to them. When Christ is preached, revelation would follow (Knitter 2008:38).

2. Evidence from other religions is found in the history of religions. Despite what the followers of other religions learn through their faith, salvation is nothing but trying to save themselves. According to Tillich (Knitter 2008:39–40) all religions forget that their signs, symbols and rituals are not the divine, but merely point to the divine.

Are other religions lost?

Clearly both exponents the total replacement and partial replacement models are of the opinion that there is only salvation in and through Jesus Christ. But if God is such a loving God, does that mean he will send someone that never heard of him to hell? Isn't something wrong with this view? The argument from the replacement model is that if people are lost, we cannot blame it on God. People, whether Christian or not, rebelled against God; all people know enough about God to *rebel* against God, and all people do. People are not condemned for not knowing Jesus, they are condemned for not following the light of God. Some evangelicals within the replacement model still feel that this is a harsh view. They feel that humans can't make anything of general revelation without Christ. However, the conclusion remains the same: People who have never heard of Christ are still lost. The reality is that the Bible never provides a clear argument for what happens to those who have never heard about Jesus. The only thing that the Bible does say is that when someone is saved, it is through Jesus (Knitter 2008:44–45).

There are optimists who feel that we:

> [*D*]on't find in the Bible evidence that unambiguous and stress that if God is free to save anybody, God's love will move in the direction of forgiveness. Yet they don't want to say for sure, or how. That would be going beyond the Bible. But they hope. (p. 45)

There are a couple of theories on how someone that never heard of Christ might be saved:

1. The last-minute solution. God will send a messenger to those who lived a moral life, just before their death, to tell them about Jesus and salvation through him.
2. The after-death solution. A final opportunity will be granted to those who did their best with what they had.
3. The election solution. This argument states that God knows what would have happened if things were different; therefore God knows who would have accepted the message, and then saves those individuals.
4. The exception model. God makes exceptions for the holy people in other religions.
5. The universal solution. Jesus died and was raised for all people, and therefore at the end of time all will have the opportunity to hear and accept the message. The God of history will then also be revealed as the God of all religions.
6. The wider mercy solution, also known as inclusivism. God is present in the whole universe, and therefore his grace is available to the whole universe. (Knitter 2008:45–47)

The history of Christian exclusivism

To understand Christian exclusivism better we need to look at the history and development of the Christian exclusivist paradigm. The subject matter can be taken as far back as the Old Testament. Exclusivism originated out of a deep-seated monotheistic faith in God, which revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Now salvation was possible for all, but only through Jesus. This view resulted in the stance that all other religions were idolatry. The early church was particularly strict concerning the subject. The context of the early church was one of plurality of religions and convictions. The early Christians were also very critical of the values and practices of other religions. Another contributing factor was the persecution which the early church faced, not only from other religions but also from Judaism. Christians were viewed by Judaism as heretics within the Jewish faith. Justin Martyr was the first to form a notion of possible tolerance towards other religions. His approach was that other religions possess truth claims which actually belong to the Christian religion. According to him all people possess the seed of the divine *logos* (Netland 1991:12), however, their knowledge of the *logos* was incomplete and distorted, which resulted in errors in their teachings. The church in the Middle Ages continued to grow more exclusivist and negative toward other religions. By the 13th century the church was severely exclusivist, and held that there was no salvation outside the Christian church. Exclusivism was the dominant departure point in both the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant church up to the 19th century. From the perception that those outside the church are lost grew a powerful missionary conviction. To have a better understanding of missionary movements they must be viewed in the light of Christian exclusivism (Netland 1991:10–14).

In the early 20th century missionaries had a very open approach to other religions. At the international Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 missionaries called for a dialogue and cooperation with other religions. In 1938 there were still calls to work with other religions in overcoming the dangers of fascism. In 1971 the WCC set up a unit of Dialogue with People of Living Faiths. The purpose was to promote respect for the other in dialogue. In 1977 the WCC issued its Guidelines on Dialogue. These urged Christians to enter into dialogue with other religions as part of our calling, '[*s*]o while the WCC was pushing dialogue beyond the replacement model, its theology was still located in a perspective of total replacement' (Knitter 2008:42–43).

The understanding of Christian exclusivism is that where other religions have a different truth claim, the other religions are wrong. Traditionally they said that Christians and Muslims can't both be right about the identity of Jesus. Christians claim that Jesus is the incarnation of the only living God, he was both fully God and fully man. The claim that Jesus is God is blasphemy according to the Muslims, even though Jesus was one of the greatest prophets that ever lived, he was nothing more than a mere man. This is a

fundamental point of separation between Christians and Muslims. It is possible for both Christians and Muslims to be wrong about the identity of Jesus, but it is impossible for both to be right. This example demonstrates the problem we face with different truth claims. In this case the exclusivist Christian group would not debate with the Muslims, and simply discard the Muslims' truth claims (Netland 1991:112).

For Netland (1991) this is one of the major problems with the exclusivist paradigm. Whilst truth is a legitimate claim in other domains, it is out of place in religion:

> Even if there is a sense in ordinary life or in science in which truth can be regarded as propositional and exclusive, to think of religious truth in these terms is to indicate that one really does not understand what religious faith and truth are all about. Religious truth is not like ordinary truth. It is unique and thus not necessarily subject to the limitations inherent in ordinary truth. (p. 113)

Arguments against exclusivism

Truth claims are not the only argument that we will encounter against the exclusivist paradigm. In the section that follows I will refer to some of the arguments directed against this approach.

The more the Protestant tradition was exposed to and participated in dialogues with other religions, the more critical it became of the exclusivist approach. Criticism comes from theologians and exegetes who are of the opinion that exclusivist Christology is not the only approach that can be assumed from Scripture. As a result more and more people are asking questions about the possibility of multiple ways of salvation (Meiring 1996:229–230). For Gillis (1951:168) the problem is that this approach rests too heavily upon the literal interpretation of Scripture. It limits the possibility of salvation to a very small group and interprets God's activity in the world in a small historical, cultural and demographic sphere. The implication is that all who did not hear about Jesus would be lost. With only 28% of the world's population being Christian, it means that 62% of humanity will be condemned. This raises not only the question about those who did not hear about Jesus, but also those who died before Jesus was incarnated.

If, as in Christian doctrine, God is the Creator of all that exists, why would he allow the majority of people to be lost or separated from their Creator? The Christian religion is foreign to the biggest part of the world. If God wants humanity to reach perfect fullness, he must also allow an opportunity for humans to reach that fullness. Says Gillis (1951:168, 170), '[*i*]t appears cruel that God would punish faithful Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists because they have followed a different religious path from Christianity.' For D'Costa (1986:75) the biggest problem with the exclusivist paradigm is that it doesn't take God's saving will into consideration (D'Costa 1990):

> The question that arises when God is presented as being exclusively at work in Christianity is whether this does not reduce the universality of God to such an extent that God is made to appear as the tribal deity of a rather imperialistic form of Western Christianity. (p. 31)

This exclusivist approach makes it difficult for communities within countries like India, where there is a plurality of religious traditions present. Hick and Knitter (1987:69) argue that this viewpoint has a negative influence on the relationships between community members within a specific community, and can make it difficult for these members to live together in harmony. It causes division between God and humanity, between humanity and nature, and between different religious traditions.

Those that support this theory base their beliefs about Jesus on the authority of the Bible. The Bible does have authority when it comes to the convictions of Christians, but in a multireligious setting we have to accept that other religious scriptures would also be used, and that they have authority for the followers of that particular religion. How can we expect that one of these scriptures should be used as the norm? We must accept and acknowledge the plurality of scriptures, because it is never going to change (Hick & Knitter 1987:69, 77–78). The Christian exclusivist point of departure regarding other religions is based on four presumptions, namely, (1) Jesus is God incarnate, fully God and fully human, (2) salvation is only possible through Jesus' being and work, (3) the Bible is the written revelation of God, therefore it is authoritative and (4) where the Bible does not agree with the truth claims of other religions, the latter can be regarded as false and misleading (Netland 1991:34).

According to Netland (1991:27–33) there are seven reasons why Christian exclusivism is being rejected:

1. The fact that people are exposed to other religions leads people to tolerate the followers of other religions. In big cities it is not uncommon to have neighbours who are Hindus or Buddhists, et cetera. It is very easy for people to condemn or classify them as heathens, but when you get to know them and they become your friends it is no longer that easy. The same is true when people are exposed to great religious leaders of other religions. Christians are convinced that the Christian religion has great moral values, but for many Christians it is shocking to realise that there are other religious traditions with even higher moral values than Christianity. It is arrogant to insist that Christianity is uniquely true, when we find just as many respectable people in other religions (Netland 1991:28).
2. There is a growing sense of scepticism towards religion, which is visible in the 20th century and can be traced back to philosophers such as Hume and Kant, where more recent influences were those of logical positivism. Students who have received tertiary education are also more sceptical in general. Even in Theological Studies academics are careful about making truth claims. Religions

that claim that God revealed himself to them are then viewed with suspicion. There is also increasing scepticism about the Bible, and more especially with regard to the New Testament. There is wariness about what the New Testament says concerning what Jesus did and said. The perspective is that we cannot make any theological conclusion about something Jesus might possibly not have said; therefore we cannot base exclusivism on texts such as John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 (Netland 1991:28–29).

3. 'Along with scepticism we must note the growing impact of relativism. Philosopher Roger Trigg (1983:297) has observed that historically epistemological and moral relativism have always been attractive options when people who had previously led settled and complacent lives are suddenly confronted with new and different ideas and practices' (Netland 1991:29). It is very clear that an increase of exposure to different religions leads to an increase of relativism. People are becoming more open to the viewpoints of others, and there is a general feeling that everyone should be allowed to believe what they are comfortable with, and to form their own opinion. The fact that Christians insist that they possess the only and unchanging truth, and that this is a universal truth, results in many people rejecting Christianity. Allan Bloom (1987:25; Netland 1991:29–30) said, '[*t*]here is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative.'
4. A differentiation is made between the public arena of facts, and the personal sphere of values and opinions. Truth belongs to the arena of facts. Because religion is viewed as a personal matter, some feel that it is out of place to ask questions about truth and falsehood. Religion cannot be verified or falsified. It must be approached with openness and tolerance. People should be motivated to find a religion which they feel comfortable with. No one religion can be relevant to all people in all circumstances (Netland 1991:30–32).
5. Some reject the approach which the Christian exclusivism paradigm has towards religions because it is pragmatic; it only asks questions about what a religion does for its followers, but not about truth. For many the purpose of religion is as a coping mechanism for the harsh reality of the world, to give them peace when they experience trauma '[*t*]hus, to look to religion to answer ultimate metaphysical questions about the nature of humankind and its relation to God – if there even is a God! – is to misunderstand the nature and the role of religion' (Netland 1991:32). The argument then becomes that all religions should be evaluated according to what they do for their followers: If a person experiences peace in Hinduism, then Hinduism is the best religion for that person (Netland 1991:32).
6. Not only is the exclusivist approach viewed as arrogant and intolerant, it is also viewed as a factor that divides communities, cultures and religious communities. Our world is becoming more and more like a 'global community' in which we

are interdependent. We all face the same dangers, such as famine and overpopulation. It is important that we live in peace with each other, despite religious and cultural boundaries (Netland 1991:32–33).

7. Soteriological universalism is more commonly accepted, even in some Christian circles. More and more people are convinced that in the end all religions lead to God's salvation. The Christian exclusivist approach, which rejects this point of view, is seen as out of date and out of feeling with the pluralistic world. Their morality is also in question. If God is a loving God, then is he not morally obligated to give each person a fair chance of salvation? If Jesus is the only way to salvation, it automatically cuts all that have not heard of him from any chance of salvation. Is this not unfair, seeing that it is not due to any fault of their own that they have never heard of Jesus (Netland 1991:33)?

There are three further points to take note of concerning Christian exclusivism, namely, (1) Christian exclusivism does not say that all statements made by other religions are false, instead it acknowledges that there might be some truth in what they express, (2) Christian exclusivism acknowledges that other religions also have value, and that Christianity can indeed learn something from them and (3) Christian exclusivism is not the only form of exclusivism that exists, and other religions also possess an exclusivist perspective (Netland 1991:35).

Defining fundamentalism

Fundamentalism and exclusivism are closely linked and both have the same theological departure point. As we have seen, the exclusivists' viewpoint is that they alone have the truth (if you look at the total replacement model), and that they alone will be saved. In this section I seek to define fundamentalism, and explain what the causes of this movement are. Although exclusivism and fundamentalism have the same characteristics, they do not have the same causes. As I have shown, Christian exclusivism really took shape as a reaction to the pluralistic religious world in which early Christianity found itself. In this section I will prove that fundamentalism was a reaction to modernisation and secularisation. It will also be clear that exclusivism and fundamentalism have the same attitude towards other religions. Furthermore I will also examine the way in which the fundamentalist movements view Scripture, and how much authority they connect to it. From there I will identify and discuss the characteristics of this movement. When I discuss the development of fundamentalism it will become clear that it developed much later than exclusivism. (In this regard Krüger (2006) is an exception and takes fundamentalism back to about 4000 years ago. There are different opinions of when fundamentalism first appeared and when the term was first used.) Exclusivism, therefore, influenced fundamentalism, but fundamentalism did not bring about an exclusivistic approach to other religions.

Fundamentalism is a response to already conservative or traditional movements when they experience a threat. Someone or something attacks their group, culture or themselves, whether it is a movement like modernism or a perceived 'devil'. Something is threatening and they have to fight back (Küng & Moltmann 1992:3). 'When people feel threatened, they retreat and build barriers of authoritarianism, rejecting secularism and religious pluralism. They are afraid of losing their religious commitment in a pluralist society' (Shenk 1997:23). Almond, Appleby and Sivan (2003:90) say these are the true believers of a faith, whose main interest is to protect their religious way of life. Berger (2010:7) defines fundamentalism as follows, '[*f*]undamentalism is the attempt to restore or create anew a taken-for-granted body of beliefs and values.'

The shape or method of opposition by fundamentalists will be determined by what they feel the requirement of their resistance demands (Küng & Moltmann 1992):

> Fundamentalism in different religions necessarily and inevitably has nothing in common in respect to theological substance. Each exists, among other things, for their leaders and members to create distance from and antagonism to the claims of other faiths. There may be a common theological reference point in Allah, Yahweh, and the God of Jesus Christ, but fundamentalists would be the least likely factions in the various faith communities to acknowledge the validity of such a proposition or to experience common witness or worship. (pp. 3–4)

In Christianity this 'fundamentalism' is often used to describe Christian leadership which adheres strictly to the Bible. Whilst the world changes, for them the Bible is the one constant that they can always rely on. Fundamentalists would very quickly see themselves as superior to anyone who does not have the same views. They will also reject anything and anyone that appears to contradict the 'truth', Parsons (2000) has the following view:

> Another Christian will be assessed, not on his or her acceptance of Christ, but on whether he or she has similar 'sound' views on the place of Scripture. Such views will involve an acceptance of their total accuracy and inerrancy. (p. 200)

There are also different categories of fundamentalism. The first category is based on religion, and protecting their religious view. The second category is called ethno-nationalism, and is concerned with race and ethnicity, even though it still contains religious goals. The third category is classified by the media as fundamentalism due to their religious trappings, militancy and visibility (Almond et al. 2003:90).

Krüger (2006) views 'fundamentalism' as a very broad term. He says that the historical marker was in 1895 at a Bible conference in New York which decided on five fundamentals of Christianity, namely, (1) the inerrancy of the Bible, rejecting the historical-critical study of the Bible, (2) the divinity of Jesus, (3) the virgin birth of Jesus, (4) the death of Jesus, which is atonement for our sins and (5) the physical resurrection and return of Jesus Christ. Other aspects were included in the 20th century, namely, (1) the way and time in which the cosmos was created, (2) the way and time that human life came

into existence and (3) society and elements such as the status of women (Krüger 2006: 887–888).

Fundamentalism is not unique to Christianity, presently the most common example of this is Islam. It is also important to note that fundamentalism is not the same as 'conservatism', 'traditionalism', or 'orthodoxy'. Krüger (2006:888) defines it as 'the selective combination of traditional and modern/"post-modern" cultural and religious elements to protect and promote collective identity and interests in contemporary society.' The fact is that fundamentalism is closer to modernity and its elements than traditionalism is. '"Fundamentalism" thus understood, implies not only a set of substantive ideas, but also a particular cognitive style and stance, as well as a style of social positioning' (Krüger 2006:888). We should not expect fundamentalism to disappear any time soon.

Properties of fundamentalism

Fundamentalists claim that they are fighting for and defending the upholding of the right beliefs and the right behaviour. To do this they form new methods, ideologies and structures within their faith. These new approaches could even contradict their tradition and practices of earlier generations. They might even see those that want to protect traditions and practices, but who are not willing to fight back, as part of the enemy. They would also deny the fact that their actions are radically new, and argue that what they do and believe in are based on sacred teachings (Almond et al. 2003):

> They are nonetheless careful to demonstrate the continuity between their programs and teachings and the received wisdom of their religious heritage. A pronounced rootedness in Scripture and/or 'purified' tradition, coupled with a reluctance to embrace 'New Age philosophies' or 'Spirit-inspired new relations', characterizes fundamentalism as a religious mode. (pp. 92–93)

In the following section I briefly discuss the five ideological and four organisational characteristics of fundamentalism as explained in Almond et al. I then review the 10 characteristics as Krüger explains them (he takes a look at the way modernity influenced and brought about fundamentalism), as well giving as a short explanation of the characteristics outlined by Küng and Moltmann (1992).

Ideological characteristics

1. *Reaction to marginalisation of religion.* Fundamentalist movements are always in reaction to and defence against something that threatens them. Fundamentalism can be a militant effort to counter any trend that endangers their beliefs or religion. For Almond et al. (2003:93) to classify a movement as fundamentalist, they have to be concerned with the erosion of the religion and the role of religion in society.

'Whatever else fundamentalism may be ... it is a defensive reaction to the fragmentation, pluralisation, and relativisation of knowledge and understanding that are part and parcel of our time' (Berger 2010:17).

2. *Selectivity*. Fundamentalism is selective in three ways: They will select certain aspects of their religion which they want to reshape; they would select certain aspects of modernity which they want to embrace; and they would also select and single out a certain consequence of modernity (Almond et al. 2003:94–95).
3. *Moral dualism*. There is a dualism between light (good) and dark (evil), and ultimately light will defeat dark. Even though the movement does not promise purity from the darkness, it does promise protection from the darkness (Almond et al. 2003:95–96).
4. *Absolutism and inerrancy*. The scripture of this religion is true, accurate and original. It is believed that this scripture is of divine origin (with some Eastern religions as exceptions to the rule). The scriptures are absolute. Fundamentalists then reject hermeneutics developed by secularised philosophers. This does not mean that fundamentalists have a monolithic interpretation, just that they reject interpretations by outsiders (Almond et al. 2003:96).
5. *Millennialism and Messianism*. The Messiah will bring about the end times, accompanied by trials and tribulations. There is a promise that there will no longer be any suffering, and that the believer will achieve victory (Almond et al. 2003:96–97).

Organisational characteristics

1. *Elected, chosen membership*. Fundamentalist groups tend to have an elected group, sometimes even called by a term or name such as 'the faithful' or 'Covenant keepers'. They might also commit a lot of energy to make and keep a distinction between the 'insider' and the 'outsider' (Almond et al. 2003:97).
2. *Sharp boundaries*. There is normally a strong theme of being saved or being sinful and lost. Boundaries may also be implemented on elements such as a distinct vocabulary or even a dress code (Almond et al. 2003:97–98).
3. *Authoritarian organisation*. The organisation is usually based on a leader–follower principle, with elements such as heavenly grace, access to a deity, and complete understanding of the truth (Almond et al. 2003:98).
4. *Behavioural requirements*. Sinful behaviour would be opposed, and described in detail. Rules about drinking, sexuality, speech and discipline would be described. There would also be supervision of what members can read and listen to (Almond et al. 2003:98).

Krüger (2006:906) lists the following characteristics of fundamentalism, namely:

1. In the current social and cultural era, fundamentalism remains a possibility within all institutionalised religions. It is our current social, cultural and religious world that brings about the crisis experienced by religion. It is an unhealthy but unavoidable side-effect of our times.

2. Fundamentalists feel marginalised by society. The 'others' are referred to as sell-outs or an unfaithful group, and normally would be labelled with a term that indicates that they are infected or contaminated. This is similar to Almond et al.'s above-mentioned point which states that fundamentalists are normally an elected group. This point also echoes some of the thoughts mentioned under Almond et al.'s first point, stating that fundamentalists feel marginalised.
3. Fundamentalism is a mixture of elements found in normative religious traditions and modernity. 'The results can be ingenious, but does [*sic*] not represent the creative cutting edge of cultural and religious developments' (Krüger 2006:906).
4. Fundamentalism is especially present within 'the religions of the book' and the scripture is understood to be without fault. This perspective is not only held by the 'religions of the book' (Krüger 2006:906) – Almond et al. discuss this in their fourth point.
5. Fundamentalism struggles to deal with plurality, multiple interpretations or contradictory viewpoints. It oversimplifies complex issues and accuses opponents of a lack of character. They do not struggle with difficult issues, but simply cut them off by reciting scripture.
6. 'Fundamentalism reduces the various levels of traditional-religious language and discourse to a single level, with minimum allowance for the mytho-poetic dimension of such discourse. Religious language is reduced to the status of quasi-rational or scientific discourse of "fact"' (Krüger 2006:906).
7. Fundamentalists struggle to accept modern insights into historical culture and religious aspects and meanings. They don't like the idea that it is a humanly constructed product. They react with anxiety and anger about what is seen as a weakening of the distinction between the word of God, and the word of humans. They are uncomfortable with the possibility of scripture being human thought and explanations about an encounter with God.
8. Fundamentalists have a dualistic distinction between light and darkness. Almond et al. also mentioned this point. The light is associated with God, and darkness with evil. 'Light' (or truth) and justice are on the one side, the side they are on, and therefore against anything or anyone different from them. This element does not leave room for dialogue, because the other party is seen as wrong or misleading even before dialogue has begun.
9. 'Fundamentalism tends to enforce internal consolidation and conformism to existing group norms and power relations with strict controls of mind and behaviour, which often leads to the charge of hypocripy' (Krüger 2006:907).
10. Fundamentalism has an adversarial stance. *Others* are seen as opposition or even enemies; this means that violence, emotion, verbal or even physical attacks are very strong possibilities.

Küng and Moltmann (1992) give the following description of the characteristics of fundamentalism:

> An attitude to a basic value or basic idea which must be protected in a perfectionist way; in addition, there is an anxiety about the loss of this value through compromise. Characteristics of this is a need for: Anchoring; Clear identification; Perfectionism; Simplicity. (p. 23)

It is clear, according to the section on intergroup threat, that the fundamentalist wants to protect identity, group values and core.

Development of fundamentalism

There are various forms of fundamentalist movements which formed in various historical backgrounds, but there is one basic cause for the development of these movements: The expansion of modernity (Cerutti & Ragionieri 2001:55). Almond et al. propose that the cause of fundamentalism is secularisation. With the threat of secularisation religions can either respond adaptively or militantly (Almond et al. 2003:121–122). Berger agrees that certain secular views gave rise to fundamentalism, and that with secularisation came the notion that religion should be removed from the public sphere (Berger 2010:8). This was a powerful movement which saw the churches running empty. The supernatural was seen as being absent or at best very distant. Religious dogma was reduced to myths and fiction. People felt that their lives became meaningless, and they started filling them with other sensations to give them a feeling of purpose. However, some held onto the belief that there is more to life. The fact is, when an old religion or religious view eroded, a new one was formed in place, '[*r*]eligions have survived not necessarily because it [*sic*] is true, but because of the universal human need for transcendence' (Shenk 1997:24). Secularism could not replace religion. The more secularism proclaimed that there is no God, the stronger the search to recover the impression of the need for God.

Whilst Krüger (2006:887) said that fundamentalism became a term in 1985, Parson (2000:196–199) is of opinion that the first time the word 'fundamentalist' was used was in the 1920s, to describe a Christian Protestant group which opposed modernism in American churches. They were called this because they identified themselves with a theological viewpoint that was published in a series of 12 booklets called '*The Fundamentals*'. The booklets were a response to modernism as well as increased critique of the Bible. 'Fundamentalist' is also a term used in all the different religions to describe someone with a specific style of beliefs. They might then submit to the authority of that religion in such a way that they do not question it, or follow any independent thought. Not only did modernity bring theories such as evolution, but also a questioning of the Bible through the historical critical approach. Furthermore, Christianity was placed in the same category as any and all other religions (Knitter 2008:20; Ter Haar & Busuttil 2003:28). Ter Haar and Busuttil (2003:1) give a different date and place of origin for the phenomenon and term fundamentalism, and are of opinion that it started in 1979 with the Islamic revolution in Iran.

Krüger (2006) takes the development a lot further back than Parsons and Knitter. He used a table to explain society and religion, and the phenomenon of 'fundamentalism', from 200 000 years ago. He says that 'fundamentalism' became clear about 4000 years ago.

According to him 'fundamentalism' grew much stronger by the 16th century, and from the 19th century onwards it was well established. With the development of industry, science, technology and other cultures and societies, older theologies and philosophies were left behind, which meant that religions found themselves in a serious crisis (Krüger 2006):

> Originally going back to the insights of creative individuals, they have fallen behind the cutting edge of modern culture, and, forced to interact with the forces of modernity, they were pushed out of the central cultural and social position they once had. (p. 892)

Traditional religions reacted to this in three ways, namely, (1) new religions and religious movements came into existence, for example the Baha'i faith, which tends to go back to ancient practices, (2) some movements tended to turn to a mystic attempt to achieve silence beyond institutional religion and (3) the last reaction was to become fundamental. Fundamentalism, as Krüger puts it, is a child of its time. It is present in all religions – Buddhism and Hinduism included, not only Christianity or Islam. It doesn't, however, seem to be present in the African religion (Krüger 2006:892–893).

The Christian fundamentalists became divided in the 1940s to 1950s when a sector moved away from the main group since they did not share in 'their anti-intellectualism, and their lack of social concern' (Knitter 2008:20). They called themselves the 'National Association of Evangelicals'. In the 1970s we saw further development into 'New Evangelicals' or 'Ecumenical Evangelicals'. They were more open to working with other churches and felt that the fundamentalists were too rigorous in their belief that the Bible is without error (Knitter 2008:20–21).

In this section I have argued that fundamentalist movements are religious groups, as all have some sort of religious influence. These movements form as a response to a feeling of danger and opposition from certain elements in society. To protect themselves and their religious views, they construct authoritarian structures and beliefs to isolate them from any and all threats that oppose their views, beliefs or experiences. As I have mentioned earlier, it is clear that fundamentalists distance themselves from other religions because they are concerned with protection of their own identity and values. They are also not open to dialogue, as this is seen as opening up to others and thus endangering their identity.

It also became clear that fundamentalists distance themselves from others within their own religious tradition who do not hold the same interpretation or convictions which they do. Scripture plays a central role in fundamentalist movements; it is the ultimate authority and believed to embody the only and faultless truth. According to fundamentalists anyone that does not hold this view of scripture has drifted from the truth. I also discussed the ideological and organisational characteristics, with small differences given by different researchers. The main cause of the appearance of fundamentalist movements is clearly modernisation and secularism.

Defining dialogue

In this section I will try to define interreligious dialogue. I will also explain that the purpose of dialogue, in my view, is to learn about other religions and eliminate any misconceptions which might lead to wrong assumptions. I then look at some ground rules that need to be in place in order that dialogue can be conducted in such a way that the other party will always be respected.

Does dialogue have any value for us and other religious communities? When we talk about interreligious dialogue, the first question that arises is why is it necessary? One reason for the need for dialogue is the dramatic shift in the understanding of truth. This change not only makes dialogue possible, but also necessary (Swidler 1987:7). In the section that follows I will try to explain how dialogue can help us to understand the other, and even to accept different views and understandings of truth. I identify areas and phases of dialogue which can help understand the process and guide it towards a fruitful conclusion.

It will be clear that dialogue is immensely challenging, and we have to pay attention to the obstacles and hindrances that may prevent honest dialogue. In the end it will also be clear that dialogue provides benefits which we should not ignore or neglect. I will also look at what the exclusivist's, inclusivist's and pluralist's approaches to dialogue would be and whether they leave room for dialogue.

What is dialogue?

Dialogue is a conversation between parties with different views on a specific subject. The purpose of dialogue is for the different parties to learn from one another in order to grow and change. When we learn what the other party really believes, it will bring a change in attitude towards them (Swidler 1987:6). God does not fail to reveal himself to individuals or faith communities. Dialogue then is a means to discover knowledge and richness in other religions. In interreligious dialogue, Dupuis (1997:365) says, the Church is looking for the 'seed of the word' and the 'rays of truth' in other religions. We will then discover the presence of God in other religions, and be able to understand our own identity better.

The purpose then is not to manipulate or force the other person to believe what I believe, but rather to learn what they believe. This is a different approach from what we have seen in the past, where dialogue was held with the intent to defeat our opponent, and learn about them in order to convert them to our beliefs and faith. However, dialogue is not a debate – it is less about talking, and more about listening with the intention to understand the other's position as sympathetically and openly as possible. If the other person's argument is persuasive, we have to change (Swidler 1987):

> Until quite recently in almost all religious traditions, and certainly within Christianity, the idea of seeking religious, ideological wisdom, insight, truth, by way of dialogue, other than in a very initial, rudimentary fashion, occurred to very few persons, and certainly had no influence in the major religious or ideological communities. (p. 6)

Seeking religious truth through dialogue was not only not an option, it was not allowed. This changed when Pope Paul VI stated in 1964 that dialogue was demanded due to the modern, pluralist society that people found themselves in. Furthermore, the Vatican sees it as our Christian responsibility to promote dialogue with other religions, and the willingness to engage in dialogue is seen as a strength (Swidler 1987:6–7).

Dupuis (1997:359) makes a distinction between dialogue as an attitude or the spirit of dialogue, and dialogue as a distinct element. The 'spirit of dialogue' refers to the respect and friendship which fills the elements, which in turn constitutes the evangelisation of the church (Dupuis 1997):

> Dialogue means all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions. (pp. 359–360)

Swidler (1987:6) views dialogue as the process of speaking to other religions, in order to learn and grow past misconceptions. His aim is getting to know the other, whereas with Dupuis – even though he recognises that dialogue is to get to know the other – it seems like evangelisation is the ultimate goal. According to Dupuis dialogue is an invitation for the other to become part of the Christian faith; he does however state that the aim of dialogue is not to convert, even though the person in dialogue has the responsibility to witness (Dupuis 1997:360).

Reuel Howe (in Copeland 1999) defines dialogue as follows:

> Dialogue is that address and response between persons in which there is a flow of meaning between them in spite of all the obstacles that would normally block the relationship. It is that interaction between persons in which one of them seeks to give himself as he is to the other, and seeks also to know the other as he is. (p. 99)

Development of interreligious dialogue

Dialogue between religions only came into being in the latter half of the 20th century. Until then any relation between religions was in the form of apologetics, meaning that the different religious representatives tried to prove their own religions as superior to the other. When the science of the study of world religions came into being religious dialogue basically existed at the level of individual dialogue. This renewed interest in other religions resulted in interreligious conferences, such as the first meeting of the World

Parliament of Religions in 1893. Dialogue here referred to different individuals from different religions taking turns in monologue (Copeland 1999:97–98).

However, religions were still not meeting each other. Hendrik Kraemer was very prophetic about the future of interreligious dialogue when he referred to 'the *coming* dialogue of world cultures and world religions' (in Copeland 1999:98). Kraemer made this statement in 1960, but at that time dialogue between religions was not really advanced. By then study centres were already established in Asia and Africa with the specific purpose of 'in situ study of the religions by Christians and the development of interreligious dialogue' (Copeland 1999:98). These study centres were related to the International Mission Council, and later to the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. Under the leadership of Dr Stanley J. Samartha, dialogue between different parties became more common and Christian initiatives were very prominent (Copeland 1999:98).

When interreligious dialogue takes place it is not enough for different parties to discuss the meaning of life and how to live accordingly, it has to take place amongst people that are part of the specific religious community. In order to represent Christianity in dialogue, the person involved needs to be Christian. Swidler (1987:13–14) gives the following rules for dialogue, which he learned through his experience. I also look at the assumptions needed for dialogue as discussed by Copeland, but because they reflect a lot of what Swidler says, I use Swidler as a framework and expand this with assumptions which Copeland (1999:99–102) notes:

1. The purpose of dialogue is to learn in order to grow and change our perspectives of the other. When we learn about the perspective of the other, we have to act according to what we have learned. Our aim should also not be to debate in order that the other party can change. If both parties come with the intention to learn, grow and change, our dialogue partners will change their approach to us as well. This is much more effective than debate (Swidler 1987:14).
2. Interreligious dialogue is two-sided. This means that it is not only dialogue between two faiths, but also dialogue within the specific faith community. For example, Christians will enter into dialogue with other Christians; then the whole community can learn from interreligious dialogue (Swidler 1987:14).
3. Each party must come to the dialogue with honesty and sincerity. No false fronts may be kept in dialogue. Difficulties that partners face in their own religions and possible future shifts must also be declared. Each partner must assume complete honesty and sincerity from the other. If there is no honesty and sincerity, truthful dialogue will not be possible (Swidler 1987:14).
4. We must not compare our ideals with our partner's practices. We have to make sure we compare ideals with ideals, and our practices with our partner's practices (Swidler 1987:14).

5. All parties must define themselves. Only a member of a specific faith community can define that specific faith community. Being exposed to the other will lead a faith community to grow and change, and in turn they will be able to define themselves more clearly (Swidler 1987:14). The different parties also need to be well prepared in order to define themselves. In this way the dialogue would be a serious confrontation, '[*t*]o know what one believes and to be ready to give an answer concerning one's fundamental hope is essential' (Copeland 1999:100–101).
6. Each participant must come to the dialogue without assumptions of the other. The approach should be to listen with openness, and attempt to agree with the other, without violating their integrity (Dupuis 1997:378–379; Swidler 1987:15). Copeland says we must come to dialogue with assumptions. However, when Swindler says we must not come with assumptions he means that we should not assume and make up our mind what and how our dialogue partners will say, think and respond, and react on the basis of that. When Copeland says assumptions he means things that we need to understand and take into account, a presupposition. He says that we need to enter the dialogue with some knowledge of the other party which will help eliminate assumptions, and help eliminate the need for extensive explanations. It is important to allow the other party to define their own religion. This is one of the goals of dialogue – to broaden mutual understanding and knowledge: 'One may find that what one *thinks* are the tenets of another's faith are not at all what this religion believes and teaches. For all this, some basic knowledge of the other's faith, subject to correction in dialogue, is certainly preferable to none' (Copeland 1999:101).
7. Dialogue can take place only between two equals; in order for two parties to learn from one another, one cannot view the other as inferior. Only if both parties come to learn from each other can they be viewed as equals (Swidler 1987:15).
8. Dialogue can only take place on the basis of mutual trust. In order to build trust, it is advised to start with issues which two parties have in common. As trust is built we can then move on to issues which are more difficult to discuss (Swidler 1987:15).
9. Persons that enter into religious dialogue must at least be critical of themselves, but also of their religious tradition. A lack of self-criticism implies that one's religion already has all the truth, and such an attitude makes dialogue impossible. Not only that, it also points to a lack of integrity (Swidler 1987:15–15). Copeland (1999:101) acknowledges the risks of interreligious dialogue that we all need to take: 'Authentic dialogue requires both parties involved to be open to criticism of their most cherished beliefs without taking offense. It requires that they be willing to subject their basic convictions to serious challenge.'
10. Each partner must attempt to experience the religious view from within. Religion is not only part of the head, but also part of the heart and soul (Dupuis 1997:380–381; Swidler 1987:16). Newbigin (in Copeland 1999:102) said: '... we are vulnerable ... We

do not possess the truth in an unassailable form. A real meeting with a partner of another faith must mean being so open to him that his way of looking at the world becomes a real possibility for me. One has not really heard the message of one of the great religions that have moved millions of people for centuries if one has not been deeply moved by it, if one has not felt in his soul the power of it.'

11. Acknowledge the common humanity that all people share. We have to use language and interpretations shared by all, or at least understood by all '[*t*]his commonality goes deeper than ordinary speech, however, for religious language often reflects the profound, subtle and esoteric nuances of faith' (Copeland 1999:99). A lot of the articulation and clarifying of language and terminology will take place in dialogue. When we say we have to acknowledge the commonality of humanity we mean that, even if other dialogue partners do not agree with the notion that all of humanity was created in God's image, we acknowledge the desire of all of humanity to find the deeper meaning of life (Copeland 1999:99–100).
12. All parties involved in dialogue must show respect to the other party's convictions. It is not helpful to ignore the beliefs of other parties. It would be easier and more appropriate to ask for mutual respect than mutual theological convictions (Copeland 1999:100).

Goals of dialogue

A distinction must be made between intrareligious dialogue, which is the dialogue between members of the same religion, and interreligious dialogue, which is a dialogue between different faiths. Intradialogue is to bring about a pluralistic unity within a specific faith community. Unity and uniformity are not the same, and uniformity is not the goal. The goal is not to have one overarching religious ideology, the goal is rather to know ourselves more profoundly, to know the other more authentically, and to live according to this knowledge (Swidler 1987):

> We come to know ourselves largely by contrast ... Through interreligious and inter-ideological dialogue we will come to know better our own religious, ideological selves with all their consistencies and contradiction, their admirable and abhorrent aspects. Our dialogue partners will serve as mirrors for us ... (p. 26)

However, Dupuis (1997:376) states that the aim of interreligious dialogue is not only to gain knowledge (whether knowledge of ourselves or of the other), or to build friendly relations with other religious communities. Dialogue is to respond sincerely to the call of God to deepen our faith in Jesus, our mediator – a call for all to enter into a deeper relationship with God (Dupuis 1997:376).

In dialogue we will get to know our differences, and we might find that there are contradictory differences, but there will also be complementary differences. However, if

they are complementary we can expect that they only function properly within a specific faith tradition, and will not serve the same function in other faith structures. We will also find contradictory truths and values in the different faiths. But what should the behaviour of the parties be when claims are contradictory? Should they remain in dialogue, or ignore, tolerate or oppose each other? This is a serious problem with value judgements, but what about issues such as sexism? The course of action then becomes less clear-cut. We can be sure that sooner or later we will come across issues that will have to be opposed. We will then have to determine on what grounds we are to oppose these differing ideologies, and whether it is of such importance that it merits opposition. The argument then is that any values or ideologies that are hostile to human life and existence are to be opposed. The foundation for being human is a person's autonomy – his ability to make decisions based on his own reasoning and conscience, basic human rights and dignity for all (Dupuis 1997, cf. Swidler 1987:27–29):

> Sincere dialogue implies, on the one hand mutual acceptance of differences, or even of contradictions, and on the other, respect for the free decision of persons taken according to the dictate of their conscience. (p. 367)

Important areas and phases of dialogue

Swidler (1987:16) identifies and shortly describes three phases that we find in interreligious dialogue, namely:

1. The first phase is where we get to know the other, and this is a phase we never completely work through. Here we learn about our misconceptions of the other, and begin to know them for what and who they truly are.
2. In the next phase we are able to discern values and practices in the other that we can appreciate, and appropriate into our faith.
3. In the third phase the different partners begin to discern new truths and values that neither were aware of, and start to explore them. Thus, patient dialogue can lead us to new revelations and unveiling of reality.

Swidler (1987:16–20) goes further to identify three areas of dialogue:

1. Dialogue is practice. This is where we collaborate to help humanity. Religion is not only concerned with what life means, but also with how we can live according to this explanation of the meaning of life. Many problems that humanity faces bring forth action on the part of religious ideology. If different religions can work together to oppose and change these problems, we will have a much greater impact than we would have had if working as individuals, even if our work was parallel to others.' Working together could also help strengthen interreligious dialogue. This is an important area of interreligious dialogue, because action that does not lead to dialogue is mindless,

and dialogue that does not lead to action is hypocritical (Swidler 1987:16–17). Dupuis (1997:363) calls this dialogue of common commitment 'the works of justice'.

2. The spiritual area of dialogue consists of experiencing the religion of your partner from within. John Dunne (1972:ix) refers to this as 'passing over', '[*p*]assing over is a shifting of standpoint, a going over to the standpoint of another culture, another way of life, another religion. It is followed by an equal and opposite process we might call 'coming back', coming back with new insight to one's own culture, one's own way of life, one's own religion.' Here we must use our imagination to experience the feelings, stories and symbols which our partner experiences (Swidler 1987:17). This area is the sharing of prayer and contemplation in our common search for the absolute (Dupuis 1997:364).
3. The last area is the intellectual area (intellectual dialogue) (Dupuis 1997:364), which might be the biggest challenge for dialogue. The problem is how I can speak about my theological beliefs and ideologies in such a way that will allow my partner also to speak about *their* theological beliefs and ideologies, without either of us having to violate our integrity? Swidler's (1987:18–19) argument is that we have to work together towards a universal theology, a reasoned reflection upon convictions. This means taking all of the insights of a faith to explain the meaning of life and how to live accordingly, '[*w*]hat makes it universal is that the categories of reflection are such that they can be understood and embraced by persons of all religions or ideologies, not just a particular one, or particular set – for instance, Christianity, the Abrahamic religions or the theistic religions' (Swidler 1987:18–19).

The task for religious leaders of the different faiths is to express their reflections in categories, images and terms that the other can relate to. For example, Christianity could use language that will be familiar to the other Abrahamic religions (Swidler 1987:19).

Challenges and barriers to dialogue

One of the challenges to dialogue is finding a theological approach that leaves room for interreligious dialogue. Hick and Knitter (1987:81) argue for a paradigm shift away from Christocentrism to theocentrism, as they feel that an inclusive Christological approach does not leave room for dialogue. Dialogue can only take place if the partners are equal. The problem then is, can Christians truly enter into dialogue if they believe that Jesus is the only means to salvation? This forces us to look at two aspects which I have already mentioned in brief, commitment and openness.

Commitment and openness

One must not try to bracket your own faith, or expect the other to bracket their faith. To be honest and sincere both parties must accept that we enter into dialogue from our

specific religious backgrounds, and to do this with integrity we have to remain faithful to our religious convictions. Dupuis (1997:378–379) further argues that in order to remain faithful to our integrity we cannot compromise our own convictions. He also warns against syncretism in our quest to find common ground (Dupuis 1997):

> As the seriousness of the dialogue, the toning down of deep convictions on either side, so its openness demands that what is relative be not absolutized, whether by incomprehension or intransigence. In every religious faith and conviction there is the danger, and a real one, of absolutizing the relative. (pp. 378–379)

With this Dupuis clearly argues that in order for dialogue to be honest and sincere we have to remain committed to our faith convictions, and open to the fact that our partner will also be committed to theirs (Dupuis 1997:379).

As mentioned above, we have to be open to the faith conviction of our partner. This means also being willing to experience their religious experience within ourselves (Dupuis 1997):

> In all events, with the cautions that we've indicated, it is sure that, in order to be true, the interreligious dialogue requires that both partners make a positive effort to enter into each other's religious experience and overall vision, insofar as possible. We are dealing with the encounter, in one and the same person, of two ways of being, seeing and thinking. This 'intra-religious dialogue' is an indispensable preparation for an exchange between persons in the interreligious dialogue. (pp. 380–381)

Brümmer adds another problem, specifically aimed at Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These religions are not unchanging systems which can be compared to one another (Brümmer 2005):

> They are *traditions* that have developed, changed and diversified in the course of time. In many ways the differences *within* each of these traditions are as great as those *between* them. (p. 116)

This fact highlights the necessity of not only interreligious dialogue but also intrareligious dialogue, which I have already mentioned.

Copeland refers to barriers on the Christian side as well as the side of other religions. To start with, interreligious dialogue is not without controversy. On the Christian side we see that Christians fear that evangelism will be abandoned for the sake of dialogue with other religions, which might result in relativism and syncretism. The fear of other religions is that dialogue is a subtle way for Christians to convert them to Christianity (Copeland 1999):

> The barriers to the dialogical relationship between religions are formidable: for example, at best there are the deep differences between religions, the passion that accompanies religious commitment, and the esoteric nature of religious experiences and religious language. (p. 99)

Copeland also feels that Westerners have a further advantage, because dialogue will always occur in English. Furthermore, he feels that Westerners enjoy other advantages

politically and economically, and that there are still some remainders of colonialism to deal with. These barriers are so formidable that some scholars feel that true interreligious dialogue will be impossible (Copeland 1999:99).

When looking at which interreligious paradigm is best for dialogue, some feel that pluralism is the best way forward. Paul Hedges (2010) in his book *Controversies in interreligious dialogue and the theology of religions* explores the different aspects of pluralism in dialogue. Copeland (1999), however, does not agree:

> [*D*]ialogue is possible is possible for nonpluralist Christians without an imperialistic or a Christianity-centred attitude. Indeed, it can be argued that a pluralistic view, insofar that it relativizes Christology and Trinity, makes Christian dialogue impossible, since in that case the pluralist has already forsaken a traditional and, in my judgement, essential Christian claim for the sake of dialogue. (p. 99)

Fruits of dialogue

Cobb (1982) argues for a mutual transformation through dialogue. A mutual transformation between two religious traditions can lead to osmosis of complementary elements (Dupuis 1997:381–382). Panikkar (1978:149–153), on the other hand, feels that religions are different from one another, and must strive to keep their different identities. We should not aim to destroy different identities, neither should we try to bracket our faith in dialogue. Panikkar argues for syncretism, which according to him, will enrich both partners in dialogue. He says that God's Spirit is at work on both sides of the dialogue, and it can therefore not be a monologue. Christians do not possess a monopoly on truth, and must therefore be open to not only giving, but also receiving. Dupuis feels that through dialogue Christians can walk with others into a deeper understanding of truth (Dupuis 1997:382).

There is a twofold advantage to dialogue with others (Dupuis 1997:382), (1) we will enrich our own faith by discovering new depths of the Divine Mystery and (2) dialogue can serve as purification for our own faith (Dupuis 1997):

> The shock of the encounter will often raise questions, force Christians to revise gratuitous assumptions, and destroy deep-rooted prejudices or overthrow certain overly narrow conceptions or outlooks. Thus the benefits of the dialogue constitute the challenge to the Christian partner at the same time. (pp. 381–382)

Copeland proposes four things that interreligious dialogue will lead to. In the first place, dialogue will help us to understand each other better. Like Dupuis, Copeland (1999:104) also says that when we understand the religions of others better, we will also understand our own faith better. Dialogue will give us insights into how Christianity can be contextualised and indigenised in other cultures of the world. For Copeland (1999:104)

dialogue will help us in evangelising the world, and establish the universality of Christianity. It is important to note that Copeland does not suggest dialogue as a platform to convert our conversation partners – he distinctively says that dialogue is not the same as evangelism, although dialogue will provide a context and method for evangelism. There are two sides to the coin. On the one hand, we need to assure our dialogue partners that our aim is not to convert them, but the sharing of knowledge. (As I have mentioned above, other religions fear dialogue with Christians because they feel that it is a subtle attempt to convert them to Christianity.) The other side of the coin is that we as Christians have the conviction that we need to evangelise the world. Christians believe that Jesus is the Lord of all, and we want others to recognise this fact (Copeland 1999:104–105). The last benefit would be one that the whole of humanity would benefit from (Copeland 1999):

> [*T*]here is … is some promise that dialogue between Christians and persons of other religious commitments will show ways to cooperate in active measures toward building a better society and a better world. (p. 106)

Together people from different religions can take responsibility for ethical issues such as global warming, global responsibility, human rights, and many more.

Dialogue from an exclusivist viewpoint

Where previously I have defined what exclusivism is, I now briefly discuss exclusivism's approach to dialogue with others. This approach believes that it is only through the cross that God's love enters into the world, and only through the cross that God can be known. Exclusivists feel that without the particular knowledge of Jesus, you cannot know God at all. Some feel that this view is preposterous (Brümmer 2005:120). Christians believe that Jesus was the Word of God revealed, but this was the same Word of God that was already revealed in the Torah. How can we then claim that the Jews and the people of the Old Testament do not really know God? Calvin said that Abraham and other prophets were the light of God to the world. How can we say that they do not know God because they do not accept a specific revelation of God?

Similarly, the Qur'an contains literature also found in the Torah and the Bible. Wilfred Smith (1976:17) speaks about the faith of his friends that belong to other religions, and says that it is ridiculous to think that they do not know God. He says that God in all his wisdom is able to reveal himself to anyone he chooses to reveal himself to. Christians cannot claim that we have a unique privilege to the knowledge of God. In the same way, other religions cannot claim to have the only knowledge of God. When Smith says that his friends from other religions also know God, he refers to knowledge of the heart and not knowledge from the head. We can only know God to the extent that we have fellowship with God. It is only through our

knowledge of God that we can discern that others, inside and outside the Church, really know God. It is only in the light of God's revelation in Jesus that we can truly know what it means to know God. Therefore, Smith says that because God is what he is, we know that others live in his presence (Brümmer 2005:119–121; Smith 1976:17).

This then means that, because of God's revelation in Christ, Christians will be able to discern God's revelation in other religions. This also applies to Jews and Muslims, but they accept different paradigms for their faith (Brümmer 2005):

> In spite of the fact that these three traditions have different paradigms of faith, these different paradigms may yet enable them to discern the faith of their common father, Abraham, in each other and thus together seek their ultimate happiness in the loving fellowship of Abraham's God. (p. 121)

Brümmer's point of departure is that he looks for similarities in dialogue, whilst other theologians, like Dupuis, search for differences and build dialogue around these.

Dialogue in inclusivism and pluralism

Inclusivism

Karl Rahner (in Coleman 2007:8) presented the concept of anonymous Christianity; he says that God's saving grace is at work outside the church in other religions, even if they are not aware of it themselves. However, the problem is that Rahner does not extend the boundaries of the visible church. This means that even though he says that God's grace is for all people in all religions, there is still a church which is exclusively Christian (Coleman 2007:8–9). Coleman (2007:9) asks the question, '[*d*]oes … the Rahnerian inclusivist position put Christians in the strange position that they know more about the so-called "anonymous Christian" than those so-called anonymous Christians know about themselves?'

Does dialogue in this sense really lead us to know more about other religions than we know already? Christians have beliefs and practices that others do not accept, and the converse applies. Does the inclusivist view really allow the other to *be* the other? Coleman is of opinion that this view only hinders true dialogue. We want our dialogue partners to be baffled and amazed at the work of the Spirit, whilst we simply assign any ailments of their religion to the work of the Holy Spirit; however (Coleman 2007:9–11), '[*m*]y own Buddhist friends assure me that this is not the case and that I will never appreciate the Dharma to the extent that I persist in this belief' and, 'If we really believed that Christ and the Spirit is working in other religions, why would we feel the need to convert them?'

Pluralism

Pluralism says that all religions are equal – they are just different paths to God. It rejects the view that Christianity is unique and regards this view as arrogant and ignorant, viewing this claim as a way for Christians not to take other religions seriously. 'In the end, all religions are partial and incomplete interpretations of a transcendent Absolute who remains a mystery' (Coleman 2007:11). Pluralists want Christians to abort their missionary activity and their claim that Jesus stood in a unique relationship to God. Jesus offers a privileged access to God, but not an absolute access (Coleman 2007:11).

If this view is followed, there is no different way to salvation and no significant theological differences. This view also discourages dialogue. For the pluralist, religious differences do not count, we all encounter the same God. Theological differences are the elements that force us to enter into dialogue with others (Coleman 2007:12). I agree with the point which Coleman is making. The aim is not to eliminate our differences – it is these differences that make dialogue necessary and that can enrich our understanding of God and the world.

Clearly exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism each has its own problems. All three approaches have been found wanting, '[*t*]here true tensions and inconsistencies in the present theology of inter-religious dialogue' (Coleman 2007:21). But what do we do now?

Coleman proposes an approach called 'comparative theology', which moves away from doing a comprehensive theology into development of practical skills for living creatively and responsibly with people from other religions. In this way Christians do not have to forsake their core beliefs (Coleman 2007):

> Comparative theologians remain on the look-out for whatever will assist Christians to respond creatively to religious diversity. They listen respectfully to what seems similar (or has some overlap with) to their own truths. They cooperate in areas of justice and peace. They know that God does not deal with some people religiously and others only morally and neither should they. Comparative theologians should also listen respectfully to what seems utterly foreign to Christianity. They try to see how, in doing so, they can deepen their own understanding of Christianity, find, perhaps, some hidden corresponding analogue to the truth of the other religion. They undertake a dialogue of friendship by cultivating deep inter-religious friendship. (pp. 21–22)

I have defined *what* dialogue is and explained what the *purpose* behind dialogue is. The basic goal of dialogue should be to learn about the other, in order to understand and change. If this is the attitude of both parties, we will be able to work together in tolerance. This understanding of the other also leads to an understanding of ourselves. The intent cannot be to make converts.

I also explained some ground rules when it comes to dialogue. In the discussion certain phases and areas of dialogue became apparent. We have also identified a couple of

challenges that we will face in dialogue, as well as the benefits that we will experience if we are respectful, open and honest with one another. I have concluded the description by discussing what dialogue would look like in the exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist approaches. It has become clear that none of these approaches really allow for fruitful dialogue.

With reference to Coleman I mentioned a possible alternative approach called comparative theology. In the end, dialogue does not serve as a means to an end. There is more value to dialogue than just attempting to convert the other: There is a world of wisdom in the *other*. If we take time to get to know them, we will discover the value within them – but also deepen our understanding of the values within our own religion or faith. Dialogue is a necessary part of religious life, and it is a part which we have to nurture.

Searching for alternative approaches

I now propose alternatives to the traditional threefold (exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist) approaches, and explain why I do not think that these approaches leave room for dialogue. To do this I will reflect on how they influence dialogue, and explain why interreligious dialogue is so important. It will also be clear that interreligious dialogue can lead to interreligious ecumenism, and I will also investigate and explain what is meant by the latter term. It will be necessary to explore whether it is possible to have an interreligious ecumenical movement.

Furthermore I will explore Hick's proposal of a Copernican revolution, and explain his theory of moving away from Christocentrism toward theocentrism. In conclusion I will discuss and propose alternative approaches (acceptance, comparative theology and postmodern postliberal theology) in which dialogue might be successful and yield the desired fruits. The discussion on the alternative approaches will not, however, be without criticism.

We need to find other approaches when it comes to dialogue and relating to other religions. The exclusivist approach is not open to dialogue, other than to debate and try to convince the partner to conversion (Knitter 2008):

> And that means the only kind of dialogue Christians can have with persons of other faiths is one in which Christians try to get to know those faiths better in order to replace them with Christianity. (p. 33)

This cannot be the ultimate goal of dialogue. Furthermore, exclusivism is also seen by many as being intolerant (Netland 1991:302). Even though exclusivists feel that their faith is the only faith that can and will save, they are still willing to enter into dialogue.

Even though fundamentalism holds the same viewpoint as exclusivism, exclusivism is not the cause of fundamentalism. Factors such as modernisation and secularisation led to the development of fundamentalism (Almond et al. 2003:121–122; Cerutti & Ragionieri 2001:55). The aim of fundamentalism is to isolate and protect against any and all elements that threaten them, this movement is also not open for dialogue.

The goal of dialogue should be to get to know one another and learn from one another. If religions do not get to know one another they will never trust each other, and working together will be impossible. As long as our goal is only to convert the other, there will never be trust between different dialogue partners.

In order to overcome challenges in society such as terrorism, hunger and ecological struggles we need to work together. We will be more effective working together than working in parallel. If we do not enter into dialogue with one another, working together will not be our only concern – we will also be faced with continued hostility between different religions.

How can dialogue help?

I explained in the previous paragraphs why interreligious dialogue is so important. D'Arcy May (1998) has the same concern when he states:

> In recent years more and more people have become deeply concerned about the increase in fundamentalism within all religious traditions and the severe conflicts around the world where religious symbolism and sentiments are used and abused for social and political ends. This is an important concern, and calls for careful analysis and concerted action, so that some of the advances made in interfaith relations are not lost to political expediency. (p. 14)

Dialogue is a way in which we can get to know the other, and realise that they face the same challenges and struggles that we do. We become aware of their fears, their aspirations, and their idea of an ideal society. When we realise how similar our fears and ideals are, we might be willing to work with them, and perhaps even work towards addressing issues which they are facing. We might be able to assist or help them. As Niebuhr (cited in Cracknell 1986:121) said, '[*t*]he chief source of man's inhumanity to man seems to be the tribal limits of his sense of obligation to other.'

Dialogue will make us aware that we have an obligation to others, and not just toward our own people. Dialogue is a part of service to society. Willingness to enter into dialogue, and accept the other for who they are, is an example of Christian love '[*i*]t is a joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and a participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goal of a better human community' (Cracknell 1986:122). It is not a secret weapon, or an agenda for conversion; it is living our faith in Jesus, and serving the community (Cracknell 1998:122).

I have mentioned that those who argue for the partial replacement model ask that we have a religious competition, where all share their faith in an open discussion and God will convince the other that he is the one true God. Almost the same argument is provided by C.S. Song (in Copeland 1999:106–107), he argues that for the Church to make any kind of impact in Asia, they have to work with the Asian religions. The goal of their cooperation is to transform society in order for people to be free and equal and for justice to triumph. Working together like this would set the stage for people to be exposed to Christianity and for God to work in their hearts (Copeland 1999:106–107).

Dialogue would open up two areas of cooperation: Religious freedom and interreligious cooperation. Religious freedom means that everyone will have the right to practice their religion, and culture, without the threat of others discriminating against them. It also means that every religion has the right to fulfil their mission. Then everyone will have the freedom to live out their faith, without the threat of extremists attacking them (Copeland 1999:107–108). If we can cooperate in interreligious cooperation we will be able to serve the community in a spiritual and ethical dimension. All religions have the conviction that they have to serve others in society, and we will be more effective if we work together (Copeland 1999):

> [*W*]hen a person is hungry, particularly a child, it makes little difference whether the bread given is Baptist or Buddhist, Muslim or Methodist. Surely there is a pressing need for cooperation between religions in meeting the tragic need of suffering people. (pp. 108–109)

Sweet (2005:417–418) proposes interreligious ecumenism as a model for dialogue between different religions which will allow a number of participants to be involved in the dialogue, and allow different ideologies to be voiced. Ecumenism is a movement which allows cooperation and understanding between different religious denominations. It also refers to the universality of the Christian church. It is derived from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which means 'the whole inhabited world'. Ecumenism suggests that, despite their differences, different communities can work together and live in peace. Ecumenism was generally used in terms of the Christian tradition, with the aim of Christian unity. As a religious movement, ecumenism professes to try to 'know, understand, and love others as they wish to be known and understood' (Sweet 2005:417–418). The aim is to find what is shared, as well as where groups and individuals disagree, and to bring these different views together without confrontation. This will allow different groups to live and work together, it can even lead to new interpretations of truth.

Ecumenism rests on certain presuppositions about the religious traditions. The different religions or faiths are committed to the recognition of truth, and acting upon these truths. The different religions and religious perspectives do contain truth.

There are truths that all can and do share, and therefore all faiths contain some truth. There is no one group that can express all truth. There are truths that can be found in the values, experiences and practices of others.

Your personal religious beliefs are part of who you are, and cannot be separated into a private sphere, self-sufficient of the public sphere. All dialogue and discussions must begin with these presuppositions in mind (Sweet 2005:418–419). This ecumenical approach would challenge the secular idea that private convictions should be separated from public dialogue if social harmony is to triumph. Ecumenism acknowledges differences and diversity, and it does not require a neutral ground where there are no personal commitments in order to be successful. Through dialogue with one another we will realise that we cannot fully understand or articulate our own tradition's beliefs without being exposed to the views and beliefs of others. Interreligious ecumenism not only aims at cooperation, but also finding what unites the different religious traditions, 'while ecumenism … acknowledges the legitimacy and the value of difference, it aims at the mutual recognition of unity, but this unity is not identity or uniformity' (Sweet 2005:418–419).

For interreligious ecumenism to be successful, those that are involved need to acknowledge that there are certain interests, values, and concerns that all religious, political and cultural traditions share. These interests, values, and concerns reflect our human nature (Sweet 2005:420–422). If we all share the same issues, we should all attempt to resolve these issues. It would be much easier and fruitful if we would address issues with the help of others, no matter their religious views (Sweet 2005):

> Ecumenism recognizes, then, that religious belief is not just about a transcendent reality, but is also about this world. It holds – as many, if not most, religious believers hold – that the truths of religion are truths which concern and affect human life and flourishing *in concreto*. These basic interests and values related to our understanding of ourselves and our world underline our distinctively religious beliefs as a whole, and it is because these interests and these values are or can come to be seen as also basic to the religious beliefs of others, that discussion and dialogue among those of different religious denominations can begin. Ecumenical dialogue generally does not start off by asking, 'What is the divine?' A more productive starting point may be the question, 'What is it to show love to our fellow human beings?' (pp. 420–422)

This raises a concern when it comes to interreligious dialogue. The danger exists that we could move so much toward humanitarian problems that we fall into humanitarianism. We should be careful not to become so focused and driven by humanitarian problems that we lose sight of the transcendent. Interreligious ecumenism has the aim of resolving issues in society, but its aim is also to give us common ground for dialogue, and not to be a replacement for dialogue about God and spirituality.

What is necessary for a theology that allows religious pluralism?

Hick and Knitter (1987:81) propose that we move away from a Christocentric to a theocentric approach to religion. All religions revolve around God, and even Christianity revolves around God. Christianity should no longer be seen as the centre of the universe of faiths, which Hick (in Hick & Knitter 1987:81) calls the 'Copernican revolution'. The central aspect of God's nature is his universal saving will, if it be God's will that all be saved, then salvation will not be worked in order that only a small group of people be saved. All religions therefore lead to the same God. But if Christians accept that they can only know God through Christ, how can they shift away from a Christocentric approach to a theocentric approach? For many the shift away from Christ is a separation of what Christianity is and of a Christian perspective (McGrath 1993):

> But during the last hundred years or so we have been making new observations and have realized there are deep devotion to God, true sainthood, and deep spiritual life within these religions; and so we have created our epicycles of theory, such as the notion of anonymous Christianity and of explicit faith. But would it not be more realistic now to make the shift from Christianity at the centre to God at the centre, and see both our own and the other great world religions as revolving around the same divine reality? (pp. 460–462)

The fact that all religions have their own interpretation and understanding of God should not be seen as contradictory, but as supplementary to one another. But for many Christians you cannot remove Christ from the central message of Christianity, because according to them you only meet God through the revelation that takes place within Jesus Christ (McGrath 1993:460–462).

Dupuis (1997:191) states that being Christocentric does not mean you are not theocentric, or vice versa, as they are not contradictory viewpoints. When you are theocentric you are also Christocentric; Jesus doesn't replace God in Christocentrism, nor does Jesus fall away in theocentrism (Dupuis 1997):

> This amounts to saying Jesus Christ is the medium of God's encounter of human beings. The man Jesus belongs, no doubt, to the order of signs and symbols; but in him who has been constituted the Christ by God, who raised him from the dead (Acts 2:36), God's saving action reaches out to people in various ways, knowingly to some and to others unknowingly. (p. 191)

To have a Christocentric approach to dialogue is to exclude other religions. The division between religions and Christianity is specifically Jesus. To say we focus on God, and we believe that Jesus is God, do we really move away from Christocentrism?

The goal is not to remove Jesus from Christianity, or even deny him in dialogue. The argument is, as I have mentioned above, rather to focus on what unites us in dialogue

than what divides us. Let us not focus on Jesus and the different views concerning Jesus, it also doesn't mean that we have to deny Jesus in dialogue. As you will see below, tolerance is to allow each to hold his own views. But let us seek out the contact point between us and the other – let us start a dialogue from perspectives and values that we share. Let us start with God's love for people, or our calling to reach out to the suffering. These are themes that surface in all religions, and if we start here we will be able to work towards cooperation and interreligious ecumenism.

Previous approaches

Arnold Toynbee, a critic of exclusivism, said that in order to move away from exclusivism and intolerance we need to change our idea that Christianity is unique (Netland 1991:303). As we have seen, there are different forms of exclusivism and it would appear that the exclusivist viewpoint is intolerant. However, this intolerance does not manifest in the sense that they do not want anything to do with one another, or that they behave violently towards the other: Their intolerance appears in terms of religions not wanting to work together.

Let us look at what tolerance means. Netland (1991:305–307) identifies three categories of tolerance – legal, social, and intellectual, namely:

1. *Legal.* There is a kind of legal tolerance which allows for freedom of religion and also declares basic human rights for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion.
2. *Social.* This states that all should be treated with dignity in social settings, regardless of their views and beliefs. Even though others might not share the same conviction that we hold, we still believe that they are created in the image of God, and treat them as such.
3. *Intellectual.* Tolerance here is to accept the views of the other even though we do not agree with them, since we still accept them as a being.

Tolerance is to respect someone's views or beliefs – but it does not mean we have to accept and have the same views. In this sense, the partial replacement paradigm isn't intolerant. Netland (1991) defines intolerance as the refusal to accept something that we ought to accept morally:

> Certainly, one can consider the beliefs of another to be false and yet treat that person with dignity and respect. For to deny this is to suggest that we can only respect and treat properly those with whom we happen to agree. (pp. 308–309)

He continues to pose a scenario where a woman is raped and someone witnesses it. Even though it is in his power to do something about the situation, he turns away. Is this not intolerance, especially if this man is from a different religion or ethnicity? If we then look at society, and we witness the struggles of humanity, is it not intolerant to ignore this or not to act or work with another because they are from a different religious tradition?

According to this description of intolerance, it would seem that exclusivism is intolerant (Netland 1991:305).

Clearly we need different approaches – more *tolerant* approaches – if we are to enter into dialogue with the hope of benefitting humanity. In the next section I shortly discuss three alternative approaches that we can look at, however, length restrictions mean I will not be able to go into these models' approaches or consequences in dialogue.

Inclusivism and/or fulfilment model

This model is midway between exclusivism and pluralism, and both accepts and rejects other religions. As with the partial replacement model, this model believes that there is grace within other religions but no salvation apart from Jesus. Advocates of this model also want to avoid confrontation with other religions. They acknowledge the possibility of salvation outside Christianity – but this salvation is brought about by Jesus. In some way Christ is present in other religions. Christ is the source of all truth and goodness, and because other religions also have a degree of truth and goodness, Christ is also present in these religions in a mysterious way (Shenk 1997:43).

D'Costa (2009:7) is of opinion that there are two inclusivistic approaches, namely:

1. *Structural inclusivism.* Christ is the revelation of God but there is salvation outside the church. Even though salvation is available in other religions, that salvation is always through Christ, '[*t*]his type of inclusivism contains the pluralist legitimation of other religions as salvific structures whilst also holding to the exclusivist claims of the causal saving grace of Christ alone'.
2. *Restrictive inclusivism.* Christ is the revelation of God, 'although salvation is possible outside of the explicit Christian Church, but this does not give legitimation to other religions as possible or actual salvific structures.'

Theologians who hold this view are careful to restrict God's inclusiveness to other cultures, but not other religions. These two views are ontologically and causally exclusive, but not epistemologically exclusive (D'Costa 2009:7).

Pluralism and/or mutuality model

Pluralism does not accept Christianity or Jesus as unique – and holds that it is no more true than other religions. All religions are representations of God and provide salvation (Shenk 1997):

> Proponents of religious pluralism believe there are many paths to God, each equally valid. Since God is revealed to human beings in a variety of forms, and since the human response to God varies, no religion can claim supremacy. (p. 53)

They feel that just as the early Christians learned that salvation was not only for Jews, Christians have to realise again that salvation is not exclusive to Christianity. In the same way that God's love is universal, 'his salvation is also universal (Shenk 1997:53–54). A pluralistic approach to other religions could lead to a more tolerant approach to other. If we were of the opinion that all religions lead to one God, the differences between us would no longer divide us. There would no longer be the tension of 'we are right and you are wrong'.

D'Costa (2009:6) makes a distinction between three types of pluralism (D'Costa 2009:7):

1. *Unitary pluralism.* All religions are equal and valid paths to the one divine reality, with 'unitary' referring to one divine being behind the phenomenon of a pluralistic religious environment.
2. *Pluriform pluralism.* Religions are or can be different paths to different divine realisms.
3. *Ethical pluralism.* A religion relates to a divine being according to their ethical codes and practices, and should therefore not be judged according to their ideas about the divine. All three views hold that Christ is only one revelation amongst many, therefore all religions can learn from one another.

Alternative approaches

Recently a couple of new approaches have arisen that seek answers to the debate of religions.

Acceptance model

This approach says that there is no one religion that is superior to other religions. It also holds that we do not have to search for something that we have in common in order to make one religion just as valid as the other. We have to accept that we live in a world with a diversity of religions, '[*t*]he religious traditions of the world are really different, and we have to accept those differences – that, you might say, is the one-line summary of this model' (Knitter 2008:173). In the same way that fundamentalism was brought about as a response to secularisation and modernisation, the acceptance model is influenced by postmodernism.

There are a number of important things to note about postmodernism, namely, (1) it rejects the idea that reason is an effective way to get to truth, (2) there is no such thing as 'facts' since these are always influenced by culture, (3) science is not the only way to gain knowledge of the world and (4) it also feels that there is no ultimate truth (Knitter 2008:174–175). If we can accept that there is no ultimate and objective truth, we will have to acknowledge that we do not have an objective truth. If we cannot know an ultimate truth, then we also have to leave room to acknowledge that the other

religion is not necessarily wrong. The approach then would be that because we do not know for sure that we are right and the 'other' is wrong, we have to tolerate the other's view. We do not possess full truth, without error, and the other is not totally wrong or without truth.

This is probably the single pillar upon which postmodernism is based – the fact that there is no ultimate truth. There is no ultimate truth because there is, and will always be, diversity. Diversity will always dominate over unity (Knitter 2008):

> Truth is always truth. It always takes different shapes and assumes different identities – to the point that 'it' is no longer one, but many. ... If any one culture thinks they have the one unifying truth that will embrace all others, it will not be a truth that others can see but a truth that will be forced upon them. (p. 175)

If there is no ultimate truth, no single religion will be able to claim that truth. This means that no religion will ever be superior over another.

Knitter says that the best approach to dialogue then would be to be who we are, and be as authentic as we possibly can be. In this way the other will be able to get to know the real us. It will then not be necessary to remove fences and build common ground. The lack of common ground makes dialogue a bit more difficult, and this is considered a weakness of this paradigm. The strength, however, is that we do not start dialogue with our own presuppositions (Knitter 2008:183–184). Coming to dialogue without presuppositions is also one of the requirements for open and honest dialogue. It then makes sense that this model is seen as one of the best and more effective approaches to dialogue.

Comparative theology

Comparative theology and postliberalism developed in the late 1980s. There are three reasons for this development:

1. It is a reaction to the focus on questions of salvation that have dominated the debate between the traditional approaches to other religions (exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism). The new movements have moved the focus to the reading of texts of other religions, and the impact on Christian reading and practices. It also looks at the socio-political aspect of interreligious meetings (D'Costa 2009:8).
2. 'In reaction to the question of the validity (or otherwise) of other religions being discussed in abstraction of those religions, these movements have stressed the particular and contextual engagement with particular religions, avoiding generalizing from one particular to the general' (D'Costa 2009:8).
3. These shifts also reflect the philosophical beliefs (D'Costa 2009:8).

Comparative theology is the notion that we should stop our attempts to provide a framework for all religions. We should therefore engage other religions in their particularity, in order to see what we as Christians can learn from their scripture and practices, '[*w*]e do not need a theology *of* religions, but multiple theologies *in* engagement *with* religions' (D'Costa 2009:8). I agree with what D'Costa is saying. If we engage Eastern religions and dialogue on their practices of meditation, for example, this can enrich Christians' meditative practices.

Comparative theologians agree on seven points. Firstly, the three traditional approaches make Christians immune against the power of other religions, because they were fixed on the salvation of non-believers but cared very little about the religions themselves. The dialogue between religions must become the centre of the situation as it reflects the situation of the religious world of modern society (D'Costa 2009:37). Secondly, dialogue comes before theology of religions as it is a practice and not a theory. We must learn about and from other religions before forming theories about them (D'Costa 2009:37–38). Thirdly, with the comparative approach the specific religion becomes the focus in dialogue, which means the comparativists would become specialists in religions (D'Costa 2009:38). Fourthly, the theories of the theology of religions, according to the traditional paradigms, must now be rethought to make way for 'comparative theology of religion'. Comparativists realise that you can no longer speak generally about religion, but religions become known through close engagement with texts and practices of other religion '[*t*]his in part is a cultural-linguistic point that meanings are generated through the practice of texts and cannot be divorced from the cultural-linguistic world within which they are given' (D'Costa 2009:38). One of the new directions of theology of religions is material religion. It includes all material elements of religion such as books, rituals, symbols, et cetera. D'Costa only refers to literature. Fifthly, comparative religion sought to understand the differences and similarities, without being transformed or influenced themselves. Comparative theology expects a transformation in the light of their exposure to the other. For a few people this approach to dialogue will lead to multiple identities, with a person embracing elements of other religions. However, multiple identities are not the goal of comparative theology (D'Costa 2009:38). Sixthly, Fredericks is critical of pluralists who mythologise Christ as a prerequisite for dialogue, because it is the differences and loyalties to the different religions which make dialogue engaging '[*a*]ll the comparatists want to uphold strong doctrinal claims and represent Christianity in its orthodox form' (D'Costa 2009:39). Lastly, 'comparative theology is a call for multiple theologies in engagement, not a singular theology of religions' (D'Costa 2009:39).

There is however, some criticism against the comparative theological approach. D'Costa feels that this approach is not critical enough towards other interpretations of truth. To be open to the power and novelty of the other religions also implies that we will do so from a theological point. None of the comparativists make any judgement when it comes to the question of truth claims (D'Costa 2009):

> These are too early days to judge the comparativists, but one might raise two tentative questions. If there are no challenges and questionings of these other texts, but simply a self-referential transformation, can this be called 'comparative', 'dialogue' or even Christian? Mission, intrinsic to Christian witness, seems to have no place in the theological project except a deferred role. To put it differently, inculturation is divorced from mission and this may reflect that it is contextually defined by academic practice, not ecclesiological witness. Further, if comparative theology is allied to real engagement with living religious people, although obviously it needs not be in terms of some of its explicit goals, then are these texts not susceptible to critical questioning in respectable and reverential study, both intra-textually and inter-textually? (pp. 40–42)

Postmodern postliberalism

There are two groups of postmodern postliberals, but both focus on social and political engagement. Ethical deconstructionists, like the ethical pluralists, want to shift the engagement to politics. Some of these theologians think that theology is politics whilst others think theology involves politics. Radical orthodoxy or rhetorical out-narrationists share the view that theology involves politics, but the two are not reducible to each other. The focus lies with the political engagement, but rhetorically arguing that Christianity is the truth, out-narrating other religions. They propose that only Christianity can bring about civil peace (D'Costa 2009:8). D'Costa takes a closer look at these two branches, with his own criticism of both.

Ethical deconstruction

D'Costa focuses on the work of Henrique Pinto, which looks at Christianity as a set of practices rather than an ahistorical truth. D'Costa (2009:45) feels that Pinto 'undermines unitary notions of "Christianity", or indeed, the "world religions".' Pinto rejects the traditional approaches because they are based on a unitary model of truth. He says that exclusivism and inclusivism, with their claim to truth, reproduce the elements of imperial discourse. Pluralism, on the other hand, evades the real differences between different religions (D'Costa 2009:46).

This approach will mean that there is no longer a focus on one religion's truth claims, but on the ethical practices, allowing the different practices of the different religions to transform one another. Through this approach there is no longer an imperialist, privileged religion. Pinto's argument is that we should read our scriptures together with the scriptures and practices of other religions that are thrown together within the modern world (D'Costa 2009:46–47).

D'Costa has a problem with the methodology of this approach. Theology is translated into philosophy so vigorously that it is losing its independence '[*i*]n Pinto's hands,

theology has no proper object.' He says that Pinto's approach is so relativistic that it could easily be classified as pluralism. According to him, Pinto's Christian credentials should be questioned, because his Foucauldian framework is more important than his Christology, the Trinity and the church. Pinto was influenced by French deconstructionist philosopher Michel Foucault (D'Costa 2009:45, 47–48).

Radical orthodoxy

D'Costa looks at the work of John Milbank when he discusses radical orthodoxy. According to him, Milbanks' unique contribution to the debate lies in giving theology a voice which will allow theology to criticise culture, 'Milbank tries to show how sociology, politics, and the other disciplines read the world from their viewpoint, often encoding religion within alien reductive categories' (D'Costa 2009:48–49). He develops an alternative Christian narrative for a world that interprets Creation without God (D'Costa 2009:48–49).

Milbanks' view of the theology of religions is summed up as follows (D'Costa 2009: 49–50):

- He views religion as the organising categories for a culture.
- He also criticises inclusivism and pluralism, which sees other religions as merely reflections of themselves.
- Milbank is also critical of the ethical practice; he takes the ethical praxis in the work of Knitter and others back to 'the universal discourse in modernity', where rules and laws are prioritised above all other discussions. The ethical turn assumes that theory can be bypassed by emphasising social practice alone, as if practice stands separate from theory.
- Milbank shows the imperialism of the pluralistic approach by showing how Knitter imposes ethical criteria from the secular world on all religions, secular ideas such as 'justice' and 'peace' are made normative for all religions.
- Knitter advances the spurious argument that there is agreement within these religions about such norms. The only agreement comes from secular liberals within each religion, that fail to represent the religious tradition in terms of their founding texts and key premodern authoritative traditions.
- Milbank says that the Trinity is equal to the Hindu gods, by showing Eastern and Western understanding of power, justice and good varies. He is critical of modern Hindus who want to engage in dialogue, saying they are more likely to be representatives of liberal modernity than their ancient religious traditions.
- Milbank says there is a deep discontinuity between premodern and modern versions of religions, with no commonly accepted norms whereby religious culture can discuss fundamental matters. All rationalities are religion-specific, finding authority within that revelation, text and teachings.

- There is no place for rational dialectics in terms of mutually accepted fundamental starting points (the use of reasoned argument to defeat an opponent decisively), although there is a place for limited reasoned criticism, noting internal inconsistencies, poor argumentation, and faithlessness to the source.
- Milbank is more concerned with mission than with dialogue, as he feels that Christians are supposed to 'out-narrate' other religions when it comes to dialogue.
- Milbank never discusses issues of salvation or any other themes we find in the traditional threefold paradigms. He invites dialogue in terms of socio-political questions, 'because postliberalism and postmodernism have at least established one thing: Christianity is a form of social power.' He says that Christianity is uniquely equipped to handle modern and postmodern forms of dialogue, because Christianity is the truth.

I do not agree with this last point, as it seems to be a lot like the inclusivist and exclusivist view in that the only truth is in Christianity. Would postmodernism and postliberalism not especially argue that no specific religion has ultimate truth, and therefore no one religion would be uniquely equipped?

As with ethical deconstruction, D'Costa also critiques Milbank's radical orthodoxy. He agrees with Milbank's first three statements. On the fourth statement he states, 'Milbank assumes that all religious traditions are constructed out of a "seamless narrative succession", which is an 'uncharacteristic ahistorical judgement.' D'Costa (2009:51) says that Hinduism is far from a 'seamless narrative succession' as it displays cultural forms where the caste system has been challenged. Milbank's statements are based on an orthodox Hindu's thesis, which have been deeply challenged by many Hindu and non-Hindu scholars (D'Costa 2009:51). D'Costa feels that he still needs to work on this notion of 'out-narration'. Whilst he agrees with Milbank that 'out-narration' is necessary, both in mission and a methodological sense, he asks whether it should be held in an 'either/or' contrast with rational dialectics. He is also not sure how Milbank wants to receive Christ from other cultures without some common ground (D'Costa 2009:52).

Evaluating comparative theology and postmodern postliberalism

The comparatist and postmodern postliberalists emphasise the socio-political nature of theology as well as that the church is in the world and theology is an embodied practice. However, D'Costa feels that the comparatist approach is really only inculturation, and neglects missiological aspects. The postmodern postliberal approach emphasises mission, but neglects inculturation and rational discussions. Mission, which is a socio-political action, and inculturation, which is a social and political process 'cannot be attended to

without close knowledge of the actual culture or religion that is being engaged, both in its historical perspective and in its contemporary shape' (D'Costa 2009:53–54).

I have proved that the traditional threefold approaches are not willing to enter into dialogue with other religions, other than to convince and convert them. They will not enter into dialogue for the sole purpose of getting to know the 'other'. Through dialogue we will be able to build trust, and get to know that which is foreign to us, we will see that the 'other' faces the same struggles and fears which we face.

Furthermore, it became clear that interreligious ecumenism might not only be possible, but that there is a lot of value within this approach. It would allow different communities to work together for the good of society – not only their local society, but even the global society. Sweet's proposal of ecumenism, agrees to the acceptance model to a large extent, as it doesn't require common ground between religions. However, even although Sweet acknowledges that there are different truths, he does want to find and focus on what unites the different religions, even though this is not a requirement.

Many people are uncomfortable with the proposal of moving from Christocentrism to theocentrism, but as became clear in our discussion, this does not mean that we will no longer recognise Jesus as the Saviour, or that we will deny him in dialogue. It only means that we will focus our dialogue on God, and themes such as love and compassion. In my explanation of what intolerance means, it became clear that we cannot turn a blind eye on those who are suffering, regardless of whether they are Christian or Muslim.

I have briefly discussed the traditional threefold approaches, and it became clear that these do not leave room for true dialogue. In looking for alternative approaches, I discussed the acceptance model, comparative theology, as well as postmodern postliberal approaches. As became clear in the critique on these models, they are not ideal approaches. However, as D'Costa said, it is still very early days for these approaches, and they might need some further examination (D'Costa 2009:42).

It might seem that the most effective model on interreligious dialogue would be the acceptance model. We do not have to create common ground in order to be able to enter dialogue, we only need to be open and honest, and accept the other for who they really are.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed and explained how the exclusivist paradigm or approach related to other religions. I proved that an exclusivist approach to other religions is not viable, because it will always regard the 'other' as strange and wrong, and will never really be open and accepting towards them. The problem with this is that we are confronted with the 'other', as I have mentioned, at school, work and even at social gatherings. In

South Africa, where we are confronted daily with other religions or ethnic groups, it is necessary to find a new approach to others. I described the inclusivist and pluralist approaches as the traditional threefold approaches. I then proposed new approaches like the acceptance model, comparative theology and postmodern postliberalism in search of possible alternatives to our problem.

I also described dialogue and explained how the exclusivist paradigm influences dialogue. I explained the need for dialogue, as well as certain approaches and principles in the process, if we are to cooperate with one another. It also became apparent why there is such a great need for dialogue. If we have any hope of working together to the benefit of humanity, we have to enter into open and honest dialogue, and that requires acceptance of the other party despite the issues and differences between us. Even if cooperation is not our goal, it will at least help reduce the intergroup threat which so clearly influences all social groups.

It was clear how intergroup threat is influenced by exclusivism and fundamentalism. I explained how the fact that exclusivists view their religion as the only religion in which truth and salvation negatively influence relationships, not only between religious groups but between colleagues, neighbours or even strangers. It is also important to note, as I have already mentioned, that exclusivism is present in all religions. Clearly there is much more that can be said about the subject matter, such as studying the central role of Jesus in Christianity, and especially in Christian exclusivism.

Another issue that needs research is the role of scripture in religion. All religions believe that they have the truth and salvation, all based on their various scriptures. The concern is then that all religions use their scripture as authority on this subject. If we would enter into dialogue with the departure point that it should be based on scripture, this would leave us with another very important question: Whose scripture would be seen as normative? However, if we follow the acceptance model as our approach in dialogue, we will not have to establish a normative scriptural position. Then we could accept that we do not have the same approach to scripture, and accept that it is a subject which we will disagree on. Even though we disagree on this and other subjects, it does not hinder dialogue, as we have accepted it as a point of disagreement. The goal of comparative theology is to read each other's scripture, which could also be a possible alternative approach from which dialogue could benefit.

We have also seen that in order for dialogue to be effective we cannot enter it with the mindset of converting the other. The most effective approach is to have the attitude that we want to learn from and about the other. The goal of learning is also not to get to know the 'other' in order to know where to hit with evangelism – the goal is to get to know the other for who they are and to erase misconceptions, in order that we can build relationships through which we can work together. Eliminating misconceptions about the other will also reduce the intergroup threat experience. When we listen to the 'other'

we might even stumble across wisdom, or methods of serving and ministering to people, which we have not investigated before.

It also became clear that religious pluralism is here to stay. This makes dialogue very important and much needed. Due to the change in perceptions of truth that came with postmodernism, exclusivism is no longer an acceptable approach to other religions. For this reason I propose the acceptance model as a way of relating to other religions. My argument is that we should follow the acceptance model, and for this to be possible we have to approach one another with openness and honesty. The acceptance model is more in line with my personal views than the comparative theological and postmodern postliberal approaches. I feel that these latter approaches are so concerned with being accepting and open to the other that anything goes, and we lose the essence of what dialogue is about.

I have proposed that, in order to benefit humanity and address the suffering of those who cannot help themselves, it is necessary that different religions work together. In order for this to be possible we have to be able to enter into dialogue, which is not possible with an exclusivistic, inclusivistic or pluralistic approach. In order to be more open to dialogue I looked at Hick's proposal that we move from Christocentrism to theocentrism. I explained that this move does not mean that we remove Jesus from Christianity, or deny him in dialogue – it is simply a shift in our focus. This might assist us in looking past our religious differences.

I have successfully completed my objectives to define exclusivism, fundamentalism and dialogue. I also determined that exclusivism does not leave room for dialogue and that we have to search for alternative approaches. My proposed alternative would be to use the acceptance model as proposed by Knitter, or the comparative theology or postmodern postliberal approaches as discussed by D'Costa. In my opinion the acceptance model can be followed successfully, and it might even be unnecessary to move from Christocentrism to theocentrism.

The result which I expected was to find a way for exclusivism to relate to other religions and to enter successfully into dialogue. However, I discovered that even if exclusivism would enter into dialogue, it would be to convert the 'other' rather than to understand and work together. Exclusivism and fundamentalism are also an element of the intergroup threat experience and do nothing to reduce these experiences. I have identified and discussed the ground rules for dialogue if we wish it to be fruitful. Furthermore I have successfully identified and discussed alternative approaches to dialogue, even though I was not able to enter into the deeper ramifications that they would have on dialogue. I have also shown how a move from Christocentrism to theocentrism could improve interreligious dialogue, if we chose to take that route.

Further research could be necessary to determine *how* we could move past fundamentalism and exclusivism to more open approaches. A look at the influences of the different approaches on and implications for dialogue might also be necessary. Further research might be done on how dialogue functions in these different approaches, and how they would look from the viewpoint of specific religious traditions.

Summary: Chapter 5

It is attempted to analyse the relationship between Christianity, Judaism and Islam from the viewpoint of the intergroup threat theory. Although the departure point for this study is the intergroup threat theory, there are other elements related to dialogue discussed as well. An explanation of the threat theory serves as an argument for dialogue. In a world with different social dynamics and religions, we need to move past the intergroup threat. There will never be peace and harmony in the world as long as different groups are suspicious of one another. Dialogue, however, is a very complex process. The different approaches to other religions are discussed, and a suggestion is made for an approach which will promote dialogue and interreligious ecumenism. The focus of this study is on the exclusivist paradigm. The way in which the exclusivist paradigm influences the way we relate to other religions in dialogue and how the paradigm addresses the humanitarian problem, which all nations face, is discussed. In the first section of this chapter, there is an analysis of whether the intergroup threat is more common amongst exclusivist communities and groups with a fundamental orientation. A search for alternatives to the exclusivist approach is then presented. The question addressed here is, how can humanity work together for the better of humanity, despite their religious differences?

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