



Christianity and Other Religions
How should one view other religions from a Christian
perspective?

Trine Meisland
VID Specialized University
VID Stavanger

Master's Thesis
Master in Theology

Antall ord: 23380
15.05.2023

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Abstract

How should one view other religions from a Christian perspective? In my thesis I look at three central theologians, who each belong to one of the main approaches to other religions. Hick belongs to the pluralist approach, Rahner to the inclusivist approach, and Kraemer to the exclusivist approach. Each of Hick, Rahner and Kraemer's view is presented, based on their particular work. Their view is then analyzed according to the criteria of Tomas Nygren, which are Bible, coherence, and relevance. The Bible criterion is the most important one, in finding a Christian approach to other religions.

I have found that these three theologians view other religions quite differently. Hick sees other religions as worshipping the same God as the Christian does and views other religions as valid paths to salvation. Rahner views other religions as containing grace and supernatural elements on account of Christ. He claims that one can have a saving relationship with God through these other religions until the gospel becomes a real historical factor in one's history and culture. Rahner claims that there is only one salvation, and this is the salvation in Christ. Kraemer says that Jesus is the revelation in his own person and is thus different than the founders in the other religions. He views other religions as a quest for self-justification, self-redemption, and self-sanctification, and stresses Jesus being universal. Kraemer says that other religions are essentially in error, but that one should look for God having revealed himself in other religions, as well as searching for demonic elements.

Hick's work is the least Biblical. He has strong inner coherence but is irrelevant for the Christian fellowship. He is however relevant for the culture. Rahner's view is more biblical than Hick, however he goes further than the Bible, and his work cannot be rooted in the Bible. Some is also contrary to the Bible. Rahner lacks inner coherence and is irrelevant for both the culture and the Christian fellowship in speaking of anonymous Christians. Kraemer uses most biblical material, and mostly uses it in a good way. He can be critiqued on a few points when it comes to inner coherence. Kraemer is of relevance for the Christian fellowship, however, fails to be of relevance for the culture. Jesus is different than the founders in the other religions by being the revelation in his own person, and other religions should be viewed as self-justification.

Key words

Theology of religion, salvation, Hick, Rahner, Kraemer, exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism

Nøkkelord

Religionsteologi, frelse, Hick, Rahner, Kraemer, eksklusivisme, inklusivisme, pluralisme

Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Knut Alfsvåg for guiding me through the process of writing a master thesis. I would like to thank him for his time, for his helpful insights and sharp mind. I also want to thank VID Stavanger, which is a school that has an eye for the individual, as well as for the helpful staff. I want to thank all my professors during the years, as well as fellow students.

I also want to thank my fiancé Ole Martin Garnes Reigstad for support during this time, for conversations about my thesis, and for planning our wedding while I'm writing my thesis. I also would like to thank my family, for being supportive towards my studies, as well as different Christian leaders and fellowships that have been important for me. I would like to give a special thanks to Sentrumkirken Sandnes, to IMI Church, as well as YWAM Salem.

Lastly I would like to thank Jesus;

for all that he has done, and for all that he will do

for the cross & resurrection

and

for the new heaven & new earth

-Trine

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1 Introduction

1.1 Developing my thesis

In The Great Commission, Jesus commands his followers the following:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18b-20) ¹

Here Jesus commands his followers to make disciples. They are to teach people to follow Christ. It is not just some people, but his followers are to make disciples of all nations. Jesus does not say do this if you want to, but he commands his followers to do so.

In John 14:6, Jesus says “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”. At the same time, there are also other religions in this world, claiming different things. How should a Christian view these other religions, and make sense of there still being so many different religions? Is Jesus the only way to salvation, or are there different options?

As a follower of Christ, I believe this subject matters, and is of great importance. I believe that getting a deeper understanding of this issue, will have a positive effect when it comes to being a follower, doing mission and evangelism.

¹ English Standard Version (ESV). I will be using the ESV Bible version as a standard in this thesis when referencing Scripture.

1.2 Theology of Religion: A historical overview

1.2.1 A historical overview

I want to start by looking at how theologians through the ages have approached the question of how to view other religions. This will not be a complete overview, however I have tried to make it a thorough one, as well as chronological. This overview will give a glimpse into the discussion and some major voices from about 100 A.D, until today.

Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165) wrote in a time when people asked how Christianity relates to Judaism, as well as how it relates to the classic religions from late antiquity. These questions were of special importance from the time of the New Testament, until the third century. Martyr wrote that the ones who “lived according to the Logos” were Christians. (McGrath, 2016, 493-4) He said that the Logos had spread seeds throughout the world. Martyr argued that because of these seeds, people in all times and cultures can become Christians. Martyr treated Judaism differently than the other religions. He spoke of Christ as the new law, and about Christ fulfilling and replacing the Old Testament. Martyr said that Christians and Jews believe in the same God, but that they believe differently regarding the law and Moses. He said that God created the universe, and that God is the only God who exists. (McGrath, 2016, 493-4)

The famous church father and bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430) wrote around 250 years later. Augustine agreed with Martyr, saying that there is only one God. Augustine said that God has been revealed, is true and deserves to be worshipped. Augustine also criticized polytheism. He claimed that the gods cannot help humans, nor give humans eternal life, and should thus not be worshipped. (Plantinga, 1999, 62-63)

Another important voice worth mentioning is the Athanasian creed (c.6th cent). The creed starts with “Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic faith. Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally.” (Plantinga, 1999, 87) After these sentences, the catholic faith is explained. Then the creed closes with “This is the catholic faith: one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully.” (Plantinga,

1999, 89)²: The creed is thus very clear. It states that one cannot be saved outside the orthodox faith. (Plantinga, 1999, 86-89) The Athanasian creed claims that the orthodox faith is the only way to salvation, whereas Augustin and Justin Martyr speak of the one God who is the one who saves.

Moving to the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) wanted to engage non-Christians and explain the Catholic Christian faith to them. He did not think one should do this by doctrines but wanted to find a common ground. He found a common ground in classical philosophy. The job was then to use reason to find truth, rather than using truth from revelation. The non-Christians did not acknowledge the Bible having authority, and thus did not see the doctrines as having authority either. (Plantinga, 1999, 93-94) Aquinas is thus a voice aiming at explaining the Christian faith for the non-Christians, in a way that is understandable for them.

Pope Boniface 8th (c.1230-1303) lived around the same time as Thomas Aquinas. He said that there is “...no salvation outside the ‘one holy Catholic and apostolic Church,’...” (Plantinga, 1999, 123) Here, he spoke of the Roman Catholic Church, and declared that salvation could not be found outside that church. In addition, one also needed to submit to the Pope in order to be saved. (Plantinga, 1999, 123) Salvation is thus said to be connected to the catholic church, in opposed to the orthodox church.

The reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) focused on the concept of justification. For him, salvation was not connected to keeping the catholic faith as in the Athanasian creed or tied to belonging to the catholic church. Luther said that one is justified by grace alone. He said that humans cannot save themselves, and that grace and the gospel makes believers free from the law, and from incorrect views of works. (Plantinga, 1999, 129)

For John Calvin (1509-1564), it was not justification by faith alone, but Scripture that he emphasized. Calvin said that Scripture is needed for getting to know God in a way that saves. (Plantinga, 1999, 137) Scripture was thus seen as a means to get to know God, and by this, one could be saved. Here it seems like the person itself is playing a more active role, than

² Catholic faith should here be understood as universal faith. It is before the split between the east (orthodox) and west (catholic) in 1054. Orthodox faith should be understood as the correct faith.

with Luther. A person needs to use the Scripture, and really get to know God, in order to be saved.

A Catholic council met from 1545 until 1563 discussing theological matters. This council is called the council of Trent. The Catholic church had received major critique by the protestants, especially on their view of authority. The council created a creed, stating again as Pope Boniface 8th did, the need for the Catholic faith in order to be saved. (Plantinga, 1999, 163)

G.E. Lessing (1729-81) brings something new into the discussion. He claims that tolerance and humanitarianism is more important than doctrines and creeds. His focus is thus not primarily on what is right and true, but on how to deal with differences. Lessing was an enlightenment scholar and was labeled as unorthodox. In his writings, he expressed his views, but not explicitly. One needed to interpret them in order to get the real meaning. He did this in order to prevent getting caught. Since Lessing did not state his views explicitly, it is hard to know for certain what he meant. It seems however that Lessing argued for tolerance among Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. He also claimed that no one should make decisive judgments about those religions, or that no one is able to do so. (Plantinga, 1999, 182) Lessing thus shifts the focus from speaking about what is true and right, to speaking of tolerance as an approach to deal with differences.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) also brings something new into the discussion. He spoke of religion as "something else: a sense and taste for the infinite, the universe, the whole, or God." And as "...the feeling (Gefühl) of absolute dependence or consciousness of relation to God." (Plantinga, 1999, 188) His focus is thus not on religion as knowledge, morality, or action, but on the feeling. Schleiermacher claimed that different religions experience the feeling of dependence, but that they describe it in different ways. He claimed that each religion stresses the different sides of God. Christianity is distinct as being the religion in which the feeling is in the purest form. Schleiermacher sees Jesus as an example of being God-conscious. (Plantinga, 1999, 188-9)

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) was a part of a group that was skeptical to Christian uniqueness and absoluteness. This is in some ways similar to Lessing, who argued that one cannot make

judgements between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Troeltsch claimed that one cannot give final or objective statements about religions and claimed that one should therefore focus on understanding each religion in its context. Troeltsch saw God as being revealed in history, and not primarily through the Bible. Troeltsch said that Christianity should be studied in the context of other religions at that time, and within the context of history. He assumed that similarities between different cultures were borrowed from each other. Troeltsch said that Christianity has tried to prove itself absolute by pointing to the Christian revelation and its validity by history. This does not work according to Troeltsch. One cannot show Christianity to be ultimately valid by the means of history. He says that Christianity should stop striving for being the absolute religion and should instead be content with being the most viable option. (Plantinga, 1999, 209-10)

Karl Barth (1886-1968) on the other hand said that Christianity is the true religion. He did not want to place Christianity side by side with the other religions. Barth saw religion as unbelief, and as humans rejecting the revelation of God, and trying to find God on their own. Barth thus stresses the revelation given by God and is an opponent of general revelation. (Plantinga, 1999, 223-224)

Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965) also emphasized the revelation of God. He claimed that all religions need to be judged in light of God's revelation in Christ. He pointed out that it was not just other religions that needed to be judged this way, but Christianity as well. Kraemer saw a discontinuity between Christianity and other religions. It was not like Schleiermacher, who stressed some kind of continuity between Christianity and other religions. (Plantinga, 1999, 243)

Joachim Wach (1898-1955) saw the religions as preparations for Christianity. He thus sees a continuity between Christianity and the other religions, as Schleiermacher did. Wach saw the other religions as people experiencing God's general revelation. Christianity was seen as the final revelation. Wach saw God as powerful, and as having multiple manifestations. Different religions are thus a response to God's different manifestations in general revelation. Wach placed Jesus at the center, even though he was open to non-Christians knowing about God, knowing truth, and being saved. (Plantinga, 1999, 267)

The writer of Narnia, Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) viewed religions as myths created by humans during the ages. The myths show part of the true situation, and come close to telling the truth. Lewis saw the incarnation as a “myth become fact”, and claim that all the other myths are witnessing about the incarnation. (McGrath, 2016, 498, 500)

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) is an important voice within theology of religions. He claimed that Christians should not try to convert non-Christians, but should instead go deeper within their own religion. Tillich spoke of a criteria Christians could use to judge itself in light of the world religions. He spoke of “...participation in the spiritual power of the Christ-event, the power which makes Christianity dynamic.” (Plantinga, 1999, 279)

Karl Rahner (1904-84) on the other hand saw Christianity as the absolute religion, and saw it as needed for salvation. According to Rahner, people will see that Christianity is the true religion. Before they see Christianity as true, other religions can provide grace and faith that saves. Grace and faith from other religions can only save a person until a person encounters Christianity. After this, that person can no longer be saved by the religion that provided grace and faith. For Rahner, these people should not be seen as non-Christians, but as anonymous Christians. The church should help these people become conscious Christians who confess their faith. Rahner sees these anonymous Christians as already having truth, revelation, grace and faith. (Plantinga, 1999, 288)

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) states that Jesus is the way, truth, and life, and that the church should proclaim this. Jesus is the fulfillment of religious striving. The council also stated that there is unity among the religions. The religions all have their origin in God. The religions all deal with human existence, and all have an end in God. (Plantinga, 1999, 304)

The council also said that other religions contain some truth and goodness. They can thus be of help in preparing for the gospel. (McGrath, 2016, 526) It thus agrees with Wach, stating that other religions can be of help preparing for the gospel.

The Canadian historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000) saw the Christian approach that claims that Jesus is the only way to salvation, as arrogant. He said that Christians should be humble when encountering people of other religions and must not be arrogant. (Plantinga, 1999, 309) He thus placed a great importance on the approach.

John Hick (1922-2012) argued that different religions worship the same God, and that other religions are valid paths to God. He critiqued the two other main approaches to other religions. Hick claimed that different religions have different names for God and see him different. This is similar to Schleiermacher, who claimed that different religions showed different sides of God. For Hick, salvation involves a transformation, in which one is transformed from being centered on oneself, to being centered on the Reality. He also said that the incarnation should be seen as metaphorical and mythological. (Plantinga, 1999, 322-323)

Lesslie Newbigin (1909-98) stated that only God knows who will be saved. This is similar to Lessing, who claimed that a person cannot judge between the three Abrahamic religions. Newbigin did not see the point of discussing who will be saved, because only God knows who will be saved. Newbigin saw it however important to tell the Christian story, and to engage in interreligious dialogue. Newbigin's own position is a mix of the three main approaches to other religions. (Plantinga, 1999, 347, 352)

Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) restated a lot of the same that as was stated in the Second Vatican council. Paul 2nd restated that other religions contain truth, and that there is a unity among the different religions. He saw all religions as containing seeds of the word. The Pope stressed that Jesus is the one who makes salvation possible. He also said that the church communicates God being universally manifested, and that God has a universal salvific will. (Plantinga, 1999, 358)

John B. Cobb Jr. (1925-) is skeptical to the term "religion" and ask if there is a universal term called religion. He does not think "religion" can be a universal term, and this gives implications to the field of theology of religion. If there is no universal term religion, it might be hard to talk about theology of religion. (McGrath, 2016, 513, 515) He thus sheds light on an important question.

Pope Francis (1936-) sees interreligious dialogue as important. He says it can lead to less tension between the religions, and to a greater understanding. He also says that this can lead to conversations about the big existential questions, and that it can be a door for evangelism. The church should engage in discussions but should not lose sight of preaching

the gospel to all nations. As the Second Vatican Council states, other religions have rays of truth and goodness in them. Pope Francis says that seeds have been sown, and that Christian missionaries fulfill the seeds that have been sown. (McGrath, 2016, 526-528)

Clark Pinnock (1937-2010) argues that the pluralist position leads to a weak Christology. Pinnock is critical to Hick and says that his position is hard to justify intellectually. (McGrath, 2016, 506, 509)

David Ford (1948-) has an interest in interreligious dialogue. He is especially interested in "Scriptural reasoning". When doing Scriptural reasoning, people from different religions come together and read their sacred texts together and discuss them. Ford points out that reading different scriptures together may lead to seeing the great differences between the religions. (McGrath, 2016, 523, 525-6)

Gavin D'Costa (1958-) is critical to using the threefold categorization that has been traditionally used. In his book *Christianity and world religions: disputed questions in the theology of religions*, he adds two new categories to the list. D'Costa critiques the threefold categories, and says they are inadequate, misleading, and are a bit patronizing. He suggests to rather use seven different categories, based on how people are saved. These approaches are through the Trinity, through Christ, through the Spirit, through the Church, through God in a theocentric matter, through the Real, and through good works. (D'Costa, 2009, 34-35) (McGrath, 2016, 519, 521)

Through the ages different theologians have emphasized and stressed different elements and claimed different things. Some have stressed that there is only one God, and that he deserves to be worshipped. Others have claimed that one can only be saved through the catholic faith as the correct faith, and others that it is through the catholic church one is saved. Luther spoke of justification through faith alone, while Calvin stressed using the Bible to get to know God in a way that saves. Later the focus shifted from speaking about what was true, to how to deal with differences. Some people saw a continuity between Christianity and other religions, while others disagreed. Another later view was to not try to convert others, but to instead go deeper into one's own Christian faith. Religions were said to have their origin in God, and for containing truth and goodness. Some saw religion as

unbelief, while others saw the claim that Christianity is the only way to God as arrogant. The term “religion” is questioned, and interreligious dialogue has gotten more focus, as well as reading different scriptures from different religions together. There are many different views, but they can however be placed within three main approaches to other religions. These are exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

The threefold categorization D’Costa talks about is exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. It has been much used and describe the three main approaches to Theology of Religions. The contributors above belong to one of these camps, or to multiple of them. It is important to note that these are models and may not capture every detail.

1.2.2 Exclusivism

Alister McGrath defines exclusivism like this: “Particularism (or exclusivism) holds that only those who hear and respond to the Christian gospel may be saved.” (McGrath, 2017, 491) A person thus needs to both hear the gospel, and respond to it to be saved according to this view. Gavin D’Costa distinguishes between two types of exclusivism. He calls the first view Restrictive-access exclusivism. This view claims that God has chosen some people for salvation, and others for damnation. People who say they are Christians, yet are not faithful to Christ, are not seen as among the saved ones. Central to this view is the belief that God has already decided in advance whether a person will be saved or not. D’Costa calls the second type Universal-access exclusivism. This view claims that “...because God is exclusively revealed in Christ, only those who profess Christ can be saved, who hear the gospel (*fides ex auditu*) and confess it in their hearts.” This last one is quite similar to McGrath’s definition. D’Costa’s definition points out that God is revealed in Christ, and that he is exclusively revealed in Christ. This means that God is only revealed in Christ. A person here needs to hear the gospel, and confess it in the heart. (D’Costa, 2009, 7)

1.2.3 Inclusivism

“Inclusivism argues that, although Christianity represents the normative revelation of God, salvation is nonetheless possible for those who belong to other religious traditions.”

(McGrath, 2017, 491) D'Costa divides inclusivism into two groups, structural inclusivism and restrictive inclusivism. Structural inclusivism claims that salvation is always from Christ, but that salvation can be available through other religions. This view has been quite popular since the middle of the 1900s. Restrictive pluralism sees salvation as coming from Christ. People outside the church can be saved, but other religions are not salvific. This last view is inclusive in including different people and cultures, but does not see other religions as salvific. Restrictive inclusivism is older than structural inclusivism. Traditionally, it has been spoken about grace operating outside the visible church, which restrictive inclusivism speaks about. Both types of inclusivism give different answers to whether a person can be saved without confessing Christ explicitly. Structural inclusivists see other religions as being able to save, while restrictive inclusivism answers no to this question. (D'Costa, 2009, 7,19)

1.2.4 Pluralism

McGrath defines pluralism as "Pluralism holds that all the religious traditions of humanity are equally valid manifestations of, and paths to, the same core of religious reality." This definition points out that the pluralist view sees all religions as equal paths, and as leading to the same religious reality. D'Costa divides pluralism into different groups, but point out that the different groups have much in common. Pluralists have in common believing that there are many revelations, and that these are of equal importance. Christ is thus one of these many revelations. Other religions are helpful because one can learn more about the divine from other religions. Pluralists also see dialogue as the way to do mission. D'Costa divides pluralism into three different groups. He calls the first group "Unitary pluralists". Unitary pluralists believe in one divine reality. Different religions are seen as equal or valid paths to the same divine reality. His next group is called "Pluriform pluralists". Pluriform pluralists believe that there are more than one divine reality. The last group is called "Ethical" pluralists. Ethical pluralists see religions connected to the divine, as well as having ethical standards and practices. (D'Costa, 2009, 6-7) These three groups are thus different in thinking there is only one divine reality, thinking there exists multiple divine realities, or by emphasizing ethical standards and practices. It is worth noting that pluralism developed quite recently. (D'Costa, 2009, 9)

2 Theology of Religion

2.1 Approaching the selected material

After having given a brief overview of how theologians through the ages have addressed this topic, as well as the three main approaches, I will now go more in depth into how three central theologians view this issue. I will look at my thesis; How should one view other religions from a Christian perspective? At the same time, I also want to pay attention to the questions below, because I see them helpful in answering my thesis, and working with the material.

1. How does the theologian view other religions?
2. How does the theologian view Jesus and Christianity?
3. Can other religions save, and what is meant by salvation?
4. Can truth be found in other religions, and how is this connected to salvation?

I will look at one central theologian from each of the main approaches to theology of religion. I will do this despite D'Costa's critique. The three main approaches have been important and represent some main ways to view other religions. They might not be perfect but are helpful in demonstrating three different approaches to other religions.

2.2 John Hick

John Hick is the first central theologian and belongs to the pluralist approach. He is seen as a leading figure within this approach to Theology of Religion. Hick lived in England, from 1922 until 2012. For most of his career, Hick taught in America. I will now look at how he views other religions in his work "Whatever Path Men Choose Is Mine." (D'Costa, 2009, 9) (McGrath, 2016, 509) (John Hick, 2023)

2.2.1 Religions worship the same God

Hick argues that the same thing is happening at different places of worship. One can observe this by going to places of worship in big cities.

That is to say, human beings are coming together to open their minds to a higher reality, which is thought of as the personal creator and Lord of the universe, and as making vital moral demands upon the lives of men and women. Of course the trappings are very different- in church men wear shoes and no hat; in mosque, gurdwara and temple, a hat and no shoes; in a synagogue, both. In some you sit on a pew, in others on the floor. In some there is singing, in others there is not. Different musical instruments or none are used. More importantly, the supreme being is referred to as God in a Christian church, as Adonai in a Jewish synagogue, as Allah in a Muslim Mosque, as Param Atman in a Sikh gurdwara, as Rama or Krishna in a Hindu temple. And yet there is an important sense in which what is being done in the several forms of worship is essentially the same. (Hick, 1974, 325)

Here Hick claims that the same thing is happening at the different worship services. He talks about them all opening themselves up to a higher reality. The higher reality is seen as the personal creator, and Lord of the universe. Hick also compares outward appearance, rules, and customs, as well as how one is seated. At the same time as there being many similarities, Hick also points out that there are some differences in the expressions as well.

Hick claims that the different religions have similar images of God, and that they all worship the same God, using different names. Many different religions see God as the creator of heaven and of earth. Judaism sees God in this way, as well as seeing God as the one who brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. God in Judaism is also portrayed as God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the one who called them to live as a light in the world. Hick claims that protestant Christian worship is very similar to Jewish worship. Muslims worship God as the maker of heaven and earth, as well as holy and merciful. Muslims also see God as omnipotent, as Lord of the Universe, and as one man should bow in submission to. Hick says the Sikhs worship God as "...the maker of heaven and of earth, the gracious lord of time and eternity, who demands righteousness and seeks peace and goodwill between men." (Hick, 1974, 326) Hindus have a theistic-devotional branch called bhakti. Bhakti Hindus use

personal and emotional language. They worship God as "...the ultimate Lord of all, the infinite divine Life known under many aspects of life." (Hick, 1974, 326)

Hick sees three possible approaches to other religions. The first option is that there exist many different gods. He does not spend much time dismissing this view, but argues that it is not likely, because multiple religions see God as the creator and source of the world. The second option is that Christians worship God, while people of other religions worship gods that only exist in their minds. Hick sees the third option as the most plausible. This view claims that the different religions worship the same God. Hick says that different Christian groups, as well as different individuals, view God in different ways. God can be seen as a loving Father, or as a judge. Hick claims that the non-Christian images overlap with the Christian images of God, and thus argues that the third option is the most plausible one. He sees the one God being worshipped by people of different religions. Hick adds that they have slightly different images of God, but that they overlap.

Hick sees it as likely that Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, theistic Hindus and Amida Buddhists worship the same God as Christians do. He speaks of the Ultimate Divine Reality being worshipped possibly by different religions, and of them experiencing God in different ways. (Hick, 1974, 333-4)

It is wrong to think that other religions do not have knowledge about God, and that one cannot be saved through them. Hick claims that other forms of worship found in other religions are acceptable ways of worship. One should not view non-Christians as being in spiritual darkness. (Hick, 1974, 327)

2.2.2 How Hick sees other religions

Hick argues that it is not God's will that all people shall become Christians. He argues this based on the rapid growth of the world population. The number of Christians is growing as well, but not as great as the world population. It was estimated that the world population would double from 1970 until 2005. Hick thinks that the percentage of Christians in the

world would be lower in the future as a result of the rapid world growth. Hick looks at this development and argues that it is not God's will that all shall become Christians. He says that Christians should not look down upon those who are not yet Christians. They should not be seen as unfortunate. (Hick, 1974, 309)

Religion is tied to geographical location and parents' religion. Hick says that this is almost always the case. A person who has Buddhist parents, and lives in a Buddhist area, is most likely to be a Buddhist. Hick also adds that immigration has led to a greater variety of religions. People are encountering a greater religious diversity in their neighborhood, and this can lead to new questions. (Hick, 1974, 324-5) Hick thus gives answers to why people have different religions by saying it is because of where they live, and because of the religion of the parents. At the same time, he points out that people are encountering a greater religious plurality every day.

God must be in the center, and not Christianity. Hick wants a Copernican revolution. This means that he wants an end to Christianity being placed in the middle, while other religions are revolving around it, and being measured according to how different they are. Hick sees other religions carrying true piety and devotion. Today one can know so much about these other religions. God is the source of life, and the religions reflect God in different ways claims Hick. (Hick, 1974, 329-30)

Hick sees the different religions as God's way of contacting different people in different places and at different times. He argues that this makes sense when looking at the history of religion. In the first period, humans worshipped spirits, nature gods, ancestors, and national gods. Later there occurred movements in the four major locations of civilization in the world. This happened around 900-800 B.C. These centers were in Greece, the Near East, India and China. Higher religions came later from these movements in the centers of civilization. The Hebrew prophets lived during this time, as well as did Confucius, Buddha, writers of Bhagavad Gita and the writers of the Upanishads, and others. Jesus and Muhammed came out from the Hebrew prophets. Hick points out that communication was very slow between these centers of civilization. Revelation could thus not be given at only one place. It had to be given at multiple places, and at multiple times. Hick says there is one Spirit behind these

revelations. The reason these revelations are different, is because of the difference in history, culture, language and how people live. (Hick, 1974, 330)

Hick claims that the world religions, including Christianity, has changed greatly during the ages. He points out that Islam has changed the least, but that Islam has also changed. He does however see a positive change in the interaction between the religions. Now it is less enemy mindset, and more dialogue and religions learning from each other. He sees Christianity being influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and secularism in the future.

There are so many different humans, and because of this, there will always be a variety of ways of practicing religion. This does also mean that there will be a variety in the theological emphasis. Hick believes man is born with religion, and does not think it will stop to exist, as long as the human nature is the same. (Hick, 1974, 333)

Looking forward, Hick believes there will be a greater ecumenical unity among the world religions. He believes there will be a focus on a commitment of faith and brotherhood. Hick believes differences between the different religions will be secondary in the future. He does however point out that he does not think this will result in only one religion, nor that this is desirable. (Hick, 1974, 333)

2.2.3 Critique of others position

There are some approaches to other religions that Hick sees as inadequate. He critiques Karl Rahner's notion of the anonymous Christian. Hick says that the anonymous Christians have not shown any desire to be a Christian. Hick also critiques the distinction between religion and revelation. The distinction between revelation and religion places Christianity above the other religions. It is seen as a revelation, and not just as a religion. Hick also critiques Hans Küng's view. Küng see the world religions as the common way to be saved, while Christianity is seen as the extraordinary way of salvation. (Hick, 1974, 327)

Hick critiques the Roman church for interpreting old dogmas in new ways. He thinks they should admit they were wrong, and renounce it. Hick sees this as a dishonest approach. (Hick, 1974, 328)

2.2.4 The incarnation

Hick questions whether Jesus is unique, if he is the Son of God, and if he is incarnate. He draws on the passages “I and the Father are one”, and “No one comes to the Father, but by me”. He says one needs to enter into NT criticism to find answers.

Hick says that there exist multiple powerful schools of thought, and that these have interpreted these passages different ways. He says that there cannot be found consensus between the different schools of thought, nor within the same school of thought through the ages. He also says that something changed 3-4 generations ago when it comes to the incarnation. Previous it was generally held that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he was one with the Heavenly Father. This was rooted in Jesus own claim, and in his consciousness. Hick claims that these claims are not generally held, and that many people don't think they are correct. (Hick, 1974, 330-331)

Hick uses Wolfhart Pannenberg, and claims that one can no longer take it as a fact that Jesus thought of himself as God incarnate. Hick says that he will not enter into the NT evidence himself, and that he is not competent to do so. Hick quotes Pannenberg from his work *Jesus: God and Man*. Pannenberg here say that one can no longer look at Jesus words uncritically, and that John's gospel can no longer be seen as a historical source. Pannenberg also claims that Jesus believing himself to be the Messiah is a work of the post-easter community. He says that studying the gospel shows this. Hick says that based on this, one can no longer take it as a fact that Jesus thought of himself as God incarnate. He claims one cannot know for certain whether the historical Jesus said, “I and my Father are one”. Hick argues that one cannot know for certain if this comes from the historical Jesus and can thus not build on this foundation.

Hick then questions the type of language that is being used when speaking of Jesus as God incarnate, and as the Son of God. He does not think these can be seen as literal statements. "It can hardly be a literal factual statement, since after nearly 2000 years of Christian reflection no factual content has been discerned in it. Unless, that is, we give it factual content in terms of the idea of Jesus's Virgin Birth." (Hick, 1974, 331) He elaborates on the Virgin Birth, and says that if the Holy Spirit functioned as a male in conception, then Jesus would be seen as a divine human figure, as in Greek mythology. Hick states that this is not the real meaning of the incarnation.

Looking at the Christian history, whenever theologians have stated the incarnation in a factual and literal way, it has been dismissed as heretical. The Church has rejected these factual hypothesis because they have not expressed Jesus full deity or his full humanity adequately. Hick thus concludes that it is heretical to see the Incarnation as a factual hypothesis. He says that the incarnation does not have a literal meaning, but that it is a mythological idea, a figure of speech and a poetic picture. (Hick, 1974, 331-332)

Hick sees Jesus as the contact point between God and humans. He says that the transcendental God is brought in contact with humans through the living Jesus.

And as our sufficient and saving point of contact with God there is for us something absolute about him which justifies the absolute language which Christianity has developed. Thus, reality is being expressed mythologically when we say that he is the Son of God, God incarnate the Logos made flesh. (Hick, 1974, 332)

2.2.5 Summary of Hick's view on other religions

Above I have described how John Hick views other religions in "Whatever Path Men Choose Is Mine". Hick says that Jesus saves, but that one cannot conclude that other religions cannot also save. He sees Jesus as a way humans can get in contact with the transcendental God. Hick sees the different religions as worshipping the same God, but in slightly different ways, and with overlapping images of him. Hick sees different religions having knowledge of God and being valid paths to God. He therefore thinks truth can be found in other religions. The

different religions are thus seen as God's way of reaching out to multiple people, at multiple times, in a time when communication was slow.

2.3 Karl Rahner

Karl Rahner is another central theologian. He belongs to the inclusivist approach to other religions. Rahner is a catholic theologian, and a Jesuit writer. He was German and lived from 1904 until 1984. I will here present how Rahner views other religions in his essay "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions". I will also include some of his views on Christianity, as it is helpful in how other religions relate to Christianity. Rahner states explicitly that he tries to give a catholic dogmatic interpretation of other religions and says that this does not necessarily mean it is acceptable to protestant theology as well. (Rahner, 1983, 290) (McGrath, 2011, 76) (McGrath, 2016, 500)

2.3.1 Christianity and Changes

Rahner says that religious pluralism is a bigger threat to Christianity than it is to other religions. The reason for this is that Christianity explicitly states that it is the one religion, and that it has the only valid revelation from God. Rahner points out that even Islam does not state this so absolute. Rahner sees it as hard to incorporate pluralism into Christian theology. (Rahner, 1983, 289)

Before, different religions were connected to strangers who lived far away and were not seen as a possibility for oneself. Other religions were thus seen as distant and were not seen as a great challenge. The history of another people did not play a major role in one's own history either. Globalization has brought changes and has made people far away seem like neighbors. Rahner says that "Today everybody is the next-door neighbour and spiritual neighbour of every one else in the world." (Rahner, 1983, 290) Today other religions from other places are seen as a possibility for oneself, and these other religions challenge the absolute claim of Christianity. These religions come with existential demands. (Rahner, 1983, 290)

2.3.2 First thesis

Rahner states four theses concerning Christianity and other religions. His first thesis is “...Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right.” (Rahner, 1983, 291) Rahner sees this as self-evident, and does not see a need to prove it. He points out that it is very fundamental to how Christianity sees itself.

Christianity distinguishes itself from the other religions by being instituted by God, on God’s authority. God is the one who has acted, and who has revealed himself. Rahner says that the relationship of God to man is essentially the same for all, because it is founded on Jesus’ incarnation, death and resurrection. By this, Christianity binds man to God. (Rahner, 1983, 291)

Rahner speaks about lawful and valid religion, and says that this is not man’s relationship to God, but God’s relationship to man. Rahner also stresses that lawful and valid religion is not human reflection on human existence. (Rahner, 1983, 291)

Christianity has a pre-history, and Rahner claims that this is very important when it comes to the absolute truth claims of Christianity. The pre-history goes back to the beginning of humanity and is of greater importance than many people realize. Rahner says that the New Testament portrays the pre-history as very important in giving theoretical and practical proof when it comes to Christianity’s claim to absolute truth. (Rahner, 1983, 291)

Jesus has a starting point in time and space and has not always been the way to salvation. Christianity started with Jesus, the cross and the empty tomb, and is tied to Nazareth, as well as Jerusalem, and the areas around. Jesus lived and died at a specific time in history.

Rahner says that Christianity is the true, lawful, absolute, and only religion for all people. He also says that Christianity puts other religious claims into question. Rahner wants to leave the question open, as to what exact point in time Christianity becomes an absolute obligation for all. He questions whether this happens at the same time for all people and all cultures. He does however say, that when a person understands Christianity, Christianity itself presents itself as the only way to be saved. After a person really understands

Christianity, it becomes the only valid religion and way of salvation. Rahner thus sees the moment when a person realizes and truly understands Christianity as crucially important. (Rahner, 1983, 291-2)

The world is moving towards one world history, and it is thus harder to not know about Christianity. Rahner says there will be less non-Christians and pagans who lack sufficient historical encounter with Christianity in the future. Before one was mostly influenced by local religions and culture and could not know about Christianity. Pagans might not have rejected Christianity, but it could be the case that they had never heard about it. Today there are more dialogue between non-Christians and Christians, and the non-Christians thus encounter Christianity through this means. (Rahner, 1983, 293)

2.3.3 Second thesis

Karl Rahner's second thesis is the following.

Until the moment when the gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion (even outside the Mosaic religion) does not merely contain elements of a natural knowledge of God, elements moreover, mixed up with human depravity which is the result of original sin and later aberrations. It contains also supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason a non-Christian religion can be recognized as a *lawful* religion (although only in different degrees) without thereby denying the error and depravity contained in it. (Rahner, 1983, 293)

Rahner here states that other religions contain elements of knowledge of God. The knowledge of God is not pure, but is mixed with human corruption. Other religions contain supernatural elements, and can function as a lawful religion until the gospel enters into the historical situation.

Lawful religion

Lawful religion is a central term that Rahner uses. Rahner says that non-Christian religions can function as a lawful religion for a period of time. A lawful religion must be an institutional religion, and must have a positive effect in gaining the right relationship to God, and for attaining salvation. The religion must contain supernatural, and grace filled elements. Rahner claims that one can attain God's grace through these elements, and uses theoretical deduction when arguing for this. Different religions can function as a lawful religion to different degrees, however this does not mean that all elements in a religion is lawful. If an element that is false or humanly corrupted is part of the nature of the religion, that religion cannot function as a lawful religion. Rahner here distinguishes whether a false or humanly corrupted element is part of the nature of a religion, and thus very central to the religion, or if it is just a part of the religion. Rahner sees lawful religions as a positive tool in God's plan of salvation. He also states that the Old Testament religion should not be seen as just one of the other lawful religions, but as distinct from them. The New Testament has its pre-history in the Old Testament. (Rahner, 1983, 291-300)

Rahner says distinctions are important, and that one should not view a religion as being 100% from God, or 100% from humans. Religious acts can look very differently outwards but can be directed towards the one God. The transcendence of man can be tied to many different labels according to Rahner. (Rahner, 1983, 297-8)

Rahner says that one should not deny that there are differences between non-Christian religions. He gives two examples of this. First, he points to the God-pleasing pagans in the Old Testament. He says that they "...cannot simply be thought of as living absolutely outside the concrete socially constituted religion and constructing his own religion on his native foundation..." (Rahner, 1983, 294) He also uses Paul's speech at the Areopagus to support his claim. He says that Paul did not exclude a positive view of the pagan religion. (Rahner, 1983, 294) Rahner also points out that the religion of the Israelites was intended for them, and that proselytes occurred later. (Rahner, 1983, 297-8)

Not all elements in other religions should be seen as harmless. Rahner claims that this is the case when it comes to religious, ethical and metaphysical elements, as well as how the

divine is viewed in polytheism. Rahner says that there have been protests against elements in other religions, and that these protests are still valid. He says that the heathens in the Old Testament and that the letters to Romans are examples of this. Rahner says that the church still needs to proclaim this critique. At the same time, Rahner points out that it is hard to say for certain which elements in other religions are not ok, and which are. He says that one cannot describe empirically which elements in non-Christian religions that are contrary to God's will. (Rahner, 1983, 293-4)

Rahner claims that other religions contain grace filled elements, and that Christians may not have looked careful enough to see these. Non-Christian religions must contain supernatural and gratuitous elements of if they are to be lawful. By these religions, the pre-Christians could obtain God's grace through that religion.

Until what time

One aspect concerning Rahner's second thesis, is how long a non-Christian religion is valid. Rahner asks whether the absolute claim of Christianity takes place at the same time for all people, or if one can find a historical development. If there is a historical development, Christianity as the absolute religion would occur at different times at different places and for different people. Rahner says that it is normal to think that the point in time when the objective obligation starts is the apostolic age. Then other religions, also Mosaic religions is not seen as a valid religion any longer.

Rahner himself sees this obligation starting at a different time. He argues that this happens "...when Christianity became a real historical factor in an individual history and culture – a real historical moment in a particular culture." (Rahner, 1983, 291-292) His reasons for this is missions that have lasted for 2000 years, and still seem like it's in the beginning stage.

Another argument is Suarez observations of the Jew. Suarez claims that the announcement comes first, and then commitment comes afterwards. Rahner also claims that his view about the obligation happening at a different time corresponds with Christian history and salvation history. He thus argues for the obligation not happening at the time of the apostolic age, but

that it depends on when Christianity becomes a real historical factor in an area. Rahner sees it however most plausible that a non-Christian religion can function as a lawful religion until the gospel becomes a real historical factor for those of another religion. When a non-Christian religion encounters Christianity in a real and historical way, it can no longer function as a lawful religion. (Rahner, 1983, 291-4)

Gods universal salvific will

Rahner says that a Christian must believe and proclaim that God has universal and salvific purposes towards all people, and that God is very serious about this. This is true even in this time after the fall, when original sin is a part of the reality. He also claims individual salvation should not be understood as having been reached. Rahner states that Jesus has won the salvation, and that it is a salvation of supernatural grace. Rahner says that God wants every person to be saved, and that Jesus has won the salvation of supernatural grace that divinizes man. Rahner also says that this salvation was intended for the millions of people who lived before Christ, and that the salvation was intended for the people after Christ, who has not heard about him. (Rahner, 1983, 294)

Rahner states different "if"-claims, and sees only one way of concluding. He claims that salvation is Christian. Also, that there is no salvation outside Christ. Another claim is that divinization of man has to be given as a gift, and a person cannot become worthy of it by doing good works. Rahner also claims that God has intended salvation for everyone. Based on these claims, he concludes that : "...every human being is really and truly exposed to the influence of divine, supernatural grace which offers an interior union with God and by means of which God communicates himself whether the individual takes up an attitude of acceptance or of refusal towards this grace." (Rahner, 1983, 294-5)

Rahner says that all people from all places, and at all times must have the possibility to enter into a saving relationship with God. He states that this must be the case for all times throughout history and in all situations. Rahner argues that if this is not the case, then God

cannot have serious and actually effective salvific design for all people in all times and places. (Rahner, 1983, 298)

Rahner continues his argument stating that

If, however, man can always have a positive, saving relationship to God, and if he always had to have it, then he has always had it within *that* religion which in practice was a disposal by being a factor in his sphere of existence. (Rahner, 1983, 298)

He thus claims that a person can have a saving relationship with God through other religions.

Rahner claims that religion can only exist in a social form and that a social religious order is one of the characteristics of true religion. If one were to not be able to be a part of the religion that the culture practiced, then one would lose the social aspect, and Christianity would thus be more transcendental and interior, and not tangible, but practiced indirectly according to Rahner. Rahner thus concludes that a person must be able to have a saving relationship to God through the religion in the culture and thus also have the social aspect. (Rahner, 1983, 293,299-300)

God's will vs humans sin

Rahner says that one should not think of people as already unworthy because of what they have done, judging by the natural law. One should rather think optimistically about God and his power. Humans sin and make bad choices, but God's power is greater. God has spoken forgiveness and reconciliation. Through Jesus, God has not just given the possibility of salvation, but he has given the salvation. God has also given humans the ability to choose. (Rahner, 1983, 295)

It is likely that grace is at work in every person because it is God's will that all will be saved. He sees it is possible that grace is at work when a religious person makes a moral decision. Rahner says that this choice can be measured up to a supernatural, believing and saving act. He says that a moral choice can be more than just natural morality. Rahner sees it as likely

that grace is at work in every person, no matter how far away that person seems to be from God, and no matter how sinful that person is. (Rahner, 1983, 296)

The Church & The Old Testament

The church of Christ is eschatologically final. It is instituted by God in some way, and contains what is willed by God, and what is not. This can also be called right or wrong. Rahner says that the Old Testament also contains what is right and wrong through the covenant, but that it does not give permanent guidelines. He writes

But there was no permanent, continuing and institutional court of appeal in the Old Covenant which could have differentiated authoritatively, always and with certainty for the conscience of the individual between what was willed by God and what was due to human corruption in the actual religion. (Rahner, 1983, 297)

Rahner also points out that there was no infallible court of appeal to use to distinguish between correct and wrong prophecies. The New Testament is important in setting the boundaries between what is lawful and not. Rahner says that the Holy Scriptures gives the official and valid way to distinguish between the spirits in the Old Testament religion. Further, he says that the New Testament needs to be used in order to set the Old Testament canon, and that the New Testament needs to be seen as eschatologically final and can then differentiate between what is lawful and unlawful in the Old Testament religion. (Rahner, 1983, 296-7)

2.3.4 Third thesis

Rahner's third thesis is the following;

If the second thesis is correct, then Christianity does not simply confront the members of an extra-Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who

can and must already be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian.
(Rahner, 1983, 300)

Rahner says that a person can find salvation without having been preached to. He also points out that there is only one salvation, and that is the salvation in Christ. He then concludes that it must be possible to be an anonymous Christian. (Rahner, 1983, 301)

It is important that missionaries preach to anonymous Christians, and it should not be seen as unnecessary work. Missionaries can help anonymous Christians to reflect more deeply and objectively on their faith, as well as including them in the social form of the church, which is a place where faith is professed. (Rahner, 1983, 301)

Rahner says that the task of the mission work is to make the anonymous Christians Christians who know about their faith. They are thus entering into a higher stage, and become conscious Christians. Rahner also believes that conscious Christians have a greater chance of salvation than anonymous Christians have. Rahner stresses that missionary work is not superfluous, but important. (Rahner, 1983, 301)

2.3.5 Fourth thesis

It is possibly too much to hope, on the one hand, that the religious pluralism which exists in the concrete situation of Christians will disappear in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, it is nevertheless absolutely permissible for the Christian himself to interpret this non-Christianity as Christianity of an anonymous kind which he does always still go out to meet as a missionary, seeing it as a world which is to be brought to the explicit consciousness of what already belongs to it as a divine offer or already pertains to it also over and above this as a divine gift of grace accepted unreflectedly and implicitly (Rahner, 1983, 302)

Rahner says that if the fourth thesis is true, then the church should not be seen as an exclusive community, but a historically and social community that clearly states hopes that can be found outside the church as well, in a more hidden form. (Rahner, 1983, 302)

The gospels say that hostility towards Jesus and towards the Church will not go away until the end of time. Rahner says that Christians should expect the hostility to grow in the future. He also points out the changes regarding globalization in the world. Hostility towards Christians will not just stay locally, but it will be globally because of the way the world is connected nowadays. He says that the Christians must learn to endure this.

Rahner claims that some people are in opposition to the church on the surface, but deep down they are really anonymous Christians. Those inside or outside the church should not be divided by the ones who have grace, and the ones who does not have it, but should be a fellowship which confess what is hoped for. (Rahner, 1983, 302)

Rahner says that the church should do mission, and should be tolerant and humble, at the same time as being firm, when meeting people. He says that Paul at Areopagus did this, and uses him as an example. In Acts 17:23 Paul says “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”

2.3.6 Summary of Rahner’s view on other religions

Rahner sees Christianity as the absolute religion, and says that there is only one salvation, and that is the salvation in Christ. At the same time, Rahner claims that lawful religions contain supernatural and grace filled elements on account of Christ. These religions can have a positive effect in one’s relationship to God, and one can have a saving relationship with God through a religion that was at disposal for one before one encountered Christianity. One can thus be an anonymous Christian, being a Christian without knowing it. Rahner speaks of a moment when a lawful religion cannot provide a saving relationship with God. This is the moment when the gospel enters into the historical situation of an individual.

2.4 Hendrik Kraemer

Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965) was a Dutch reformed scholar, who studied Islam for his doctorate. Kraemer has been an important contributor in the field of Theology of religion, as well as the field of mission. Kraemer has lived in Indonesia, and worked for the Dutch Bible Society. He has also been director of World Council of Churches, and has been a professor at Leiden university. *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* is one of Kraemer's important contributions. This book was written for the third missionary conference in Tambaram in India. (Plantinga, 1999, 243)

2.4.1 Studying other religions

Kraemer spends quite some time focusing on the topic of method, and how to gain knowledge in his work "An Attempt at an Answer". I will include quite a bit of this because I see it as helpful in understanding his central arguments. Kraemer says one needs accurate knowledge, and claims that this knowledge is always incomplete. A problem needs to be posed correctly in order to get a correct answer. It needs to be posed from a Christian perspective, and it does not matter how noble intentions a person has if it is done wrong. (Kraemer, 1962, 244-5)

Kraemer claims it is possible to be open minded towards other religions, and at the same time not waver in one's own beliefs. One does not need to be neutral but can take a committed approach. (Kraemer, 1962, 245)

All definitions of religion are of a psychological character, and Kraemer claims that these definitions don't get to the core of what religion really is. He says that definitions stop at psychological and sociological elements, and that they do not do justice to what religion truly is. (Kraemer, 1962, 246-7)

Kraemer claims that the word "truth" means something different in a religious setting, than it does in science. Truth in religion is not knowing from the outside but is a personal and living communion. Truth cannot be demonstrated intellectually, as in science. Truth in a

religious way is knowing God, and loving him with one's whole understanding, soul, and spirit. Kraemer claims that one does not know truth through theological, philosophical, or dogmatic reasoning and argumentation. He points to the need for a living communion, the need to be a part of a community, be a witness, and make choices connected to the religious truth. Kraemer says that truth in a religious way is not just recognized but is lived. Kraemer compares the religious truth to truth one gets to know through marriage and uses this as an image to explain it. (Kraemer, 1962, 247-8, 253)

Testimonies are documentary evidence and are not unscientific but should belong to the scientific study. Kraemer says that there is a long way to go until testimonies are seen this way but claims they should be viewed this way. They can be hard to come by, but are helpful and talk about Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus who sought God, but encountered Jesus. Testimonies tell about the journey of people who were seeking truth, and what they found. These books also tell of people leaving their old religion, and why they chose to do so. Kraemer claims that testimonies are the best books to use, and that they are better than books about other religions that are descriptive or take an approach of comparison. (Kraemer, 1962, 250, 261)

Theologians are being affected by personal and historical matters, even how hard they try to give a proper account. The work thus needs to be revised. Kraemer also says that how theologians think and feel changes with the time, and that this is another reason why theological work needs to be revised. Kraemer claims that theological work cannot be seen as normative because it constantly needs revision. (Kraemer, 1962, 246)

2.4.2 Jesus as the only criterion

Kraemer says that only God is infallible, and claims that doctrines, systems of doctrines, or a basic principle as the love-principle should not be used as a criterion. He says that these are deduced from Christianity and are thus the work of man. He also adds that they are secondary and can be replaced later. Kraemer states that the Bible is at the end a human product, but at the same time stresses its importance. The love-principle has been used to

show that Christianity is unique, but Kraemer critiques this, and claims that one cannot compare different religions and conclude that the love principle is something unique about Christianity. (Kraemer, 1962, 245, 248)

The person of Jesus Christ needs to be the criterion. By having him as the criterion, one goes back to the original, and to what produced Christianity. Kraemer claims that Jesus is an objective criterion, but not objective as in a rational universal way. Kraemer uses objective here as something “set before”. He claims that using Jesus as the criterion is the only way to pose the problem the correct way. (Kraemer, 1962, 246)

Jesus puts himself as the criterion, by saying that the truth is revealed in him. The truth is not just revealed by him, but it is revealed in Jesus himself. Jesus is God’s revelation, and Kraemer claims that Jesus is the given criterion. This should not be seen as Christians having selected Jesus as the criterion, but as recognizing the givenness. Kraemer thus sees Jesus as the only criterion, and says he is the only way of judging between what is true and untrue. The revelation reveals the truth, and this must be used in order to distinguish between where truth exists, and where it does not. The church claims that Christianity is the truth, and this rests on the revelation in Jesus. (Kraemer, 1962, 247, 249, 255)

Kraemer claims that Jesus as the criterion should be used when judging other religions, as well as when judging Christianity. He says that when doing this, it is of great importance how one sees Jesus. One’s view of Jesus will affect what one finds of truth and value in other religions, as well as one’s judgement. (Kraemer, 1962, 257, 247)

The criterion demands a living communion with Jesus. One cannot use Jesus as the criterion and take a detached approach. One must have an insider perspective in order to be able to use Jesus as the criterion. Kraemer claims that the quality of the judgement depends on the quality of the communion. He also claims that one’s judgement can change, as a result of one’s relationship to Jesus changing. (Kraemer, 1962, 256)

2.4.3 Religion and revelation

Revelation is “God acting and speaking” whereas religion is more centered on what humans do. Kraemer claims that religion is many different beliefs and activities connected to the beliefs. Kraemer claims that placing Jesus at the center also involves drawing lines between revelation and religion. He says that revelation is not a part of the category of religion, because religion is not God acting and speaking, as revelation is. Kraemer however points out that Christianity as a historical phenomenon is a religion in many ways. (Kraemer, 1962, 249)

Kraemer claims that religious knowledge does not come from man’s achievement but comes from God’s Self-communication in Christ. It is entirely God’s initiative, and humans do not play any part in this. True religion has to be given to man because man cannot find it on his own. It cannot be discovered by human rationality but needs to be revealed. One has to submit to it without questioning and must put aside the intellectual and rational if needed. This is very different from the religions, which show humans struggling in the search, but has gotten lost. Kraemer says that grace and truth come from Jesus, and that revelation is not “...supernaturally communicated doctrine or a set of precepts of truths given out as infallible.” (Kraemer, 1962, 248-50, 253)

Jesus is God’s revelation, and not all of Christianity. Kraemer says that what is revealed in Christ, and in the person of Jesus is what is normative. He further claims that Christianity, nor any other religion down on earth can be seen as normative. The Church is renewed time and time again, and constantly needs to be. Kraemer claims that Christianity shows some self-understanding when placing Jesus at the center, and claims that this distinguishes Christianity from the other religions. (Kraemer, 1962, 256-7)

2.4.4 Kramer’s view on other religions

Kraemer claims that in light of Jesus Christ, all religions are in error. This is Kraemer’s general point of view, however he stresses that this answer does have nuances. Kraemer claims that the religions in general are in error in their deepest and most essential claims. He sees the

religions as noble, yet unsound. The religions give very different answers to questions about God, man and the world, than if one were to answer those same questions in light of Christ. (Kraemer, 1962, 257-8)

Religions are in error in their core, meaning and purpose, however they are not in error in every way. Religions are a mix of what is evil, absurd, perverted, and what is extremely good, and this is the case for Christianity as well. Kraemer claims that one should actively seek after evidence of truth, value, and of what is authentic and noble in other religions. These can be found in people, experiences, ideas, institutions, practices, and rites. Kraemer claims that this mix of good and evil is not a new phenomenon, but that it has been this way before, and still is this way today. He claims that this reflects the divided human nature. (Kraemer, 1962, 262, 255)

When it comes to other religions, Kraemer says that one should search for evidence of God having revealed himself in other religions. One should also strive to see things the same way Jesus sees things. Here Kraemer also stresses the importance of God having revealed himself in Jesus. At the same time as searching for evidence of God having revealed himself in other religions, one should also notice what is demonic and devilish in other religions. Kraemer claims that both can be found in other religions. Kraemer uses stories from the Bible to support his claim. He points to the Roman ruler who showed exemplary faith, as well as Peter who had a satanic lapse. Kraemer also points to the gospels showing times when the demons had power, and when they lacked it. He also points to Nathanael who had a pure and upright heart. (Kraemer, 1962, 256)

Other religions should not be seen as incapable of containing truth and value. Nor should they be seen as a pure rebellion towards God. Kraemer uses the concept of “grace” to give some nuances to the claim that all religions are in error. In Buddhism, grace is seen as an easier way one can choose as deliverance. In “Bhakti” Hinduism, there are writings about grace. Kraemer says that grace here does not mean the same as in Christianity. It means “a private relationship between God and the individual soul.” (Kraemer, 1962, 259) Grace in the light of Christ means “that He takes away the sins of the *world*, that the redemption and renewal of the whole *world* are involved here.” (Kraemer, 1962, 259) The word grace does

not only contain different meanings in those other religions, it also has another goal, which is self-realization. (Kraemer, 1962, 258-9)

Digging deeper into the religions, Kraemer says the religions are a quest of self-redemption, self-justification and self-sanctification. Because of this, they are all in error in their ultimate meaning and significance. Kraemer claims that this is also true regarding much of the Christian religion. He uses part of 1. Corinthians 1:30, that says that Christ was made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of God. Kraemer sees the Buddhas version of Buddhism as the religion that is most consistent with self-deliverance. He also finds self-deliverance very present in the view of salvation in Hinduism. Self-justification and self-sanctification are present in the highest form of Taoism and Confucianism. (Kraemer, 1962, 258, 261)

Kraemer says that he himself has spent quite some time studying non-Christians in the East, and is impressed by them when it comes to the religious. He says that great religions in Asia focus on deliverance and salvation through mysticism. (Kraemer, 1962, 255, 264)

Kraemer says that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ cannot be seen as a continuity from what is best in the other religions. He sees a discontinuity between the revelation of God in Christ, and of what is best in other religions. He says that Jesus brings a total new world, and there is a need for a complete uprooting. A person coming to Christ must break with the former religious life, and the church must demand this. He also stresses that the person coming to Christ must openly confess Christ. (Kraemer, 1962, 258-60)

Other religions show people who have noticeable insight, think deep and noble, and are ready to pay a great prize to find the Truth, and Kraemer sees this as quite moving. Kraemer also points out that religious people can make great mistakes, and it shows a fundamental aspect of man being in error. (Kraemer, 1962, 263)

Other religions fail to address man's sinful nature. Humans want to justify themselves, want to keep their self-respect, and does not want to admit they were wrong. This way essential human elements are connected to religion. Some religions include some concept of sin, but Kraemer does not see it as adequate. They are thus blind to the biggest problem of man, and don't take it seriously. By this, the religions are in error, and take an approach of escape

according to Kraemer. Kraemer also says that this is the reason why Christianity gets so strong reactions sometimes with anger and protests. Forgiveness and propitiation are important aspects to Christianity, but they also convey man having done wrong. (Kraemer, 1962, 258, 260)

2.4.5 Kraemer's view on specific religions

Kraemer also gives an overview of many different religions. He says primitive religions consist of myths, rites and institutions. These religions help to create a continual life for individuals, as well as for the community. Primitive religions also make sure people live in harmony with the cosmos, and make sure that opponent powers are unable to hurt them. Kraemer says that people of primitive religions depend on the power from the Sacred tradition. (Kraemer, 1962, 251)

Confucianism is another religion, that is a way of living, where the goal is to turn into the "Noble One" ideal. One is to

...establish and maintain a harmony between his individual and social existence within the moral order and the order of nature, so that he can become the kind of person who fulfils the lofty ideal of the 'Noble One' and the 'Sage.' (Kraemer, 1962, 251)

Kraemer says that Confucianism is a type of humanism, but that the word "humanism" should not be understood in western terms. Confucianism is a type of self-realization where one is to live according to the Heavenly Order. The Heavenly Order is a way of living in society, where one loses oneself, and at the same time finds oneself by doing this. Confucius was the first teacher, but people cannot just follow his path. They have to find their own path to self-realization and practice it. (Kraemer, 1962, 251)

Buddhism is about being released from life through suffering, change and impermanence. Buddha was the first to find this way and shared it. Buddhists can learn the way from Buddha, but must reach the goal by themselves. The goal is Nirvana or salvation, and Buddha's way is seen as the way to reach it. Buddha claimed that he would disappear when he reached Nirvana. (Kraemer, 1962, 251) Love is another path a Buddhist can take in trying

to reach Nirvana . A person here behaves altruistic. Kraemer however points out that this is not the same love as is revealed in Jesus. He also says that God is love in his being, and that loving one's neighbor is meant to be for the neighbor's sake, and not in order to gain Nirvana. It reflects on who God is and is sincere. (Kraemer, 1962, 260)

Hinduism and Christianity are different in their core and accepting the Christian faith does not mean the same for a Hindu as for a Christian. A Hindu can incorporate elements from Christianity and still be Hindu. A Hindu would view this as becoming Christian. Kraemer says that the Hindu therefore does not accept the Christian faith like a Christian understands it, but as the Hindu understands it. A Hindu could place Jesus on the same level next to other Hindu gods. If a Hindu accepted Jesus as Lord in an absolute, personal way, it would be different, and then he would have to question everything in Jesus Christ. (Kraemer, 1962, 261)

2.4.6 Islam

Judaism and Islam are different from the religions in Asia. Christianity has a relationship to Islam and Judaism that it does not have with other religions. Islam, in its own right, claimed to have a new word of revelation in the 7th century. It thus came into being after Christianity, and declared itself to have the final revelation, and claimed that Islam is the final religion. It was central to Islam to reject both Judaism and Christianity. Islam started and grew in an environment that contained knowledge of the Old and New Testament, as well as Christian and Jewish ideas and institutions. Kraemer points out however that these ideas were often fragmented, distorted and inaccurate. (Kraemer, 1962, 257, 264)

Allah is central to Islam, and he is seen as one and almighty. Kraemer says that Allah has given revelations in the Koran, through Muhammad as his mouthpiece. The Koran tells Muslims to do penitence, convert and to unconditionally submit to Allah. The Koran is also a law, where Allah commands Muslims what to do, and what not to do. Kraemer says that Muhammad is important to Islam, yet he points out that he is not seen as part of the revelation itself but is only a messenger of it. (Kraemer, 1962, 252)

Kraemer says that Islam is a legalistic religion. In Islam, Allah is seen as inestimable, and it is he who decides if the Highest Good is within reach for a person. Kraemer says that Islam is a religion of a type of self-deliverance, self-justification and self-sanctification. He says that everything hangs upon the actions of the Muslim, and if the Muslim does what the law requires. (Kraemer, 1962, 264)

Kraemer says that Islam and Christianity have similarities, yet are very different. Both Islam and Christianity are monotheistic religions. Islam is not a religion of redemption or deliverance, and does not contain anything of the Kingdom of God. Kraemer claims it is not possible to say that Allah is the God and Father of Jesus, because they have too different views of God. Allah gave his law, that tells what Muslims are commanded to do, and what they should not do. (Kraemer, 1962, 264)

Islam and Christianity both have to be more open towards one another, be patient, and clear away great misunderstandings in order to understand each other better and make fair judgements. (Kraemer, 1962, 265)

2.4.7 Judaism

Judaism is also a religion that sees it central to keep the law. Kraemer says that Judaism is also a religion of self-deliverance as Islam is. Kraemer claims that Paul shows that one cannot attain self-deliverance through self-justification. It is the tension between law and faith. When it comes to how God is viewed, Judaism sees God as Holy, Merciful God of Israel, and this is very different from the view in Islam. (Kraemer, 1962, 264)

Kraemer says that the relationship to Israel is quite different than with the other religions. Israel was God's covenant people, and God revealed himself through them. Kraemer points out that Jesus was a Jew, that he came from the Jewish people, from Israel, and is Israel's Messiah. Jews rejected Jesus, even though he is the Messiah for the whole world. Kraemer says that God is still in his covenant with Israel. He continues by saying that the Divine Revelation binds the Old and the New covenants together. (Kraemer, 1962, 265)

Kraemer says that the Church has not replaced or taken over Israel's place. Kraemer points to Romans 11:17, that says that the Church is a branch grafted onto God's tree. The tree is God's covenant with Israel. The church should proclaim the message about Jesus to every nation, as well as to the Jews in every age. Kraemer points out that it is the same God in Judaism and Christianity who acts. Kraemer says that the Church has acted forgetful towards Israel throughout the ages, and has acted in inhumane ways towards Israel.

2.4.8 Jesus

Kraemer says that it is different with Jesus because he himself is the revelation in his own person. Jesus is the substance of the revelation, and not just a messenger bringing a revelation, nor a manifestation of a god. Kraemer uses the Bible verse in John 1:17 that says that "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (Kraemer, 1962, 252) He says that God communicates himself through the revelation, in Jesus as a person, through what he does, and through Jesus' death and resurrection. Kraemer claims that Jesus has a different position than Buddha, Confucius, and Muhammad. Jesus has his own position, and presents himself "...as the Truth, the Way and Life." (Kraemer, 1962, 252)

Kraemer says that the Church should proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the Jews and Muslims, and that the gospel is universal and for the whole earth. Kraemer says that Christians might hold back from preaching the gospel to Jews and Muslims. This is because of actions done in the past by Christians. Kraemer says that because of this, Christians can feel a feeling of guilt, and Muslims and Jews can also have some feelings still based on what has been done in the past. According to Kraemer, Stephen S. Wise claims that brotherliness in the daily life is important regarding sharing Jesus to Jews. (Kraemer, 1962, 265-6)

Kraemer sees there being two outcomes regarding Jesus. One can have faith and surrender to Jesus or take offence at Jesus. He claims that Scripture sums it up in John 17:3 saying "This is eternal life, that they should know Thee, the only and true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (Kraemer, 1962, 252)

Kraemer says that Jesus is the truth, and that Jesus will not fit into a system. Jesus breaks the systems of Christianity and other religions and demands total surrender. Jesus brings something new, and this cannot be seen before the scales fall off from one's eyes. One is converted to Jesus, and not to Christianity. It is not enough to be tolerant and incorporate elements of Christianity to one's own religions. (Kraemer, 1962, 259, 262)

2.4.9 Summary on Kraemer's view of other religions

Kraemer claims that all religions are essentially in error, giving different answers to fundamental questions. He also says one should search after God having revealed himself in other religion, at the same time as one looks for devilish and demonic elements in other religions. Kraemer claims that religions, including Christianity, must be judged according to Jesus who is the only criterion. Using Jesus as a criterion demands a living community with Jesus, and what one finds depends on how good the communion is. Jesus is different than the other founders in other religions by being the revelation in his own person.

3 Analysis

3.1 Criteria for evaluation

I gave a short overview of previous research in Theology of Religions. I will now take a closer look at the view of the three theologians Hick, Rahner and Kraemer. Before that, I will show how I will analyze the material of the three theologians. I will use some criteria from Tomas Nygren's dissertation when analyzing.

His three criteria are as following:

1. *A Bible criterion*, which assesses a theological system's ability to respond to critical exegetical and theological interpretation of biblical texts that are relevant for the doctrine in question.
2. *A criterion of internal coherence*, which assesses the degree to which a systematic theological presentation exhibits inner consistency. A theological system that coheres and succeeds in incorporating different points of doctrine is judged to have better theological potential than a system lacking inner coherence or the ability to integrate a breadth of doctrinal issues.
3. *A criterion of relevance*, which assesses a system's ability to address contemporary theological issues.

(Nygren, 2007, 245-246)

Nygren gives some information on how he uses the criteria. These criteria give a normative analysis. The first criterion makes sure the theology is a Christian theology. I want to find out how one should view other religions from a Christian perspective, and this criterion is therefore important. Nygren sees this first criterion as most important, and the second one as the second most important. With the second criterion, one is to analyze whether a system is inconsistent, or if it should be applauded for including a great variety of doctrines. Here it is also positive if the doctrines are well incorporated into the system. This makes it strong.

Criterion three is also important. It is important that a theological system manages to be in dialogue with the present time, and that it manages to meet the challenges of this time. The theological system is important in being a resource for treating, discussing, and giving answers to questions in the culture that are existential, theological and ethical. Nygren states that the present culture should necessary not be seen as normative, but that a theological system should have the potential to be critical of the present culture.

I will also treat the first criterion as most important, the second one as the second most important, and the third as the least important. It is important that the system is Christian, and this first criterion is therefore most important. I will pay extra attention to this criterion for this reason. The criteria are not a full set of criteria, but they show whether the theology of the theologian is Biblical, consistent and manages to incorporate multiple doctrines, and if it is relevant.

(Nygren, 2007, 45-46)

3.2 Hick

3.2.1 Bible

Different religions see God as the personal creator, and Lord of the universe according to Hick. The Bible describes God in many ways, and personal creator and Lord of the universe are some of the attributes of God. Hick does not compare a complete picture of who God is but uses only two attributes when he compares God in Christianity, to the divine in other religions. He also does this with these other religions, not using a complete picture of the divine, but stresses the common attributes. Romans 1:19-20 says the following:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have

been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

This Scripture can explain why different religions worship their god as personal creator, and Lord of the universe. God has himself revealed his eternal power and his divine nature in things created, and the passage says that he has done this ever since the creation of the world.

Hick says that Muslims see God as holy, merciful, omnipotent, and as one man should bow in submission to. The Sikhs view God as gracious lord of time and eternity. They say he seeks goodwill and peace between men, and that he demands righteousness. Bhakti Hindus speak of God as the infinite divine Life. It seems that all these descriptions of God can fall under the category of God's eternal power, or God's divine nature. The Bible says that God has shown his nature and divine power to men. It is therefore not so strange that different religions have descriptions that are similar to God. In his work, Hick recognizes that religions also have different images of God, but he focuses on the similar aspects. If Hick had compared full descriptions of God from all the religions, they probably would not have looked so similar.

Hick claims that other religions can be explained in three different ways. His first option is that there exist many different gods. This is easily dismissed. Hick claims that different religions see God as the creator and source of the world, and that this option is thus not likely. He thus presupposes that each of the religions are true, and gives authority to the other religions, rather than to the Bible. Hick does not look into the validity of each of the religion's truth claims, but bases his evaluation on assumptions that they are all true. Doing this, Hick bases his argumentation not only on the Bible, but also on other sacred texts from other religions. It seems like he places these other sacred texts side by side with the Bible, and gives them the same amount of authority as the Bible.

Hick's second approach is that Christians, or another religion worship the true God, while other religions worship gods that only exist in their minds. Hick does not give explanations to why he dismisses this view, other than arguing for the plausibility of the third option. The Old Testament portray gods as gods that are dead, that cannot help, and are made from

human hands. As mentioned above, the Old Testament also shows magicians being able to turn a stick of wood into a snake. This shows that magicians can do magic with the use of some force. The New Testament speaks of testing the spirits, and shows that powers and principalities exist. It also speaks of Satan, Devil and devils. Galatians 4:8-9 says:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

This passage in the New Testament also speaks about gods not being gods, and about the Galatians worshipping worthless elementary principles before. It also shows that they did not know God through these other forms of worship. Based on the Biblical material above, there is Biblical material that supports this second approach. If Hick relied on Biblical material here, he would not have dismissed this second approach so easily.

Hick's third approach is that different religions worship the same God. It is worth pointing out that Hick does not seem to claim that all religions do this, but that this is the case for multiple religions. Hick says that Christians have many different images of God, and that these overlap with non-Christian images of God. It seems like Hick here assumes that one Christian views God as love, another him as a judge, and a third as redeemer. It is not the case that Christians see God in only one way, but multiple images give a more complete picture of who he is. Some Christians focus more on the loving aspect of God, while others focus more on God being holy. The Bible also speaks of God having revealed his eternal power and divine nature in things created. (Rom. 1:19-20) Acts 4:12 says that there is no other name under heaven than Jesus Christ with whom one can be saved. In John 14:6 Jesus says that no one comes to the Father, who is God, except through himself. Even if Hick claims there are images of God in other religions that overlap with the Christian God, this third alternative is not biblical. Hick here argues out of reason and focuses on the similarities.

Hick calls God the Ultimate Divine Reality. God is not called this in the Bible, and the name is thus not biblical. It seems like Hick generalizes and tries to find a more neutral term for God.

Doing this, Hick is able to find a term that fits all the religions better, and is less tied to Christianity.

According to Hick, other religions can have knowledge of God. Romans 1 shows that God has revealed his eternal power, and divine nature through nature. Psalms 19 and 50 says that the heavens declare Gods glory, handiwork and his righteousness. It is thus Biblical to think that religions can have some knowledge about God. Hick continues to say it is wrong to think that one cannot be saved through other religions. Acts 4:12 states that there is no salvation from any other name than Christ. In John 14:6 Jesus says that he is the only way to the Father. It is thus not biblical that one can be saved through other religions.

Hick claims that other forms of worship in other religions are acceptable ways of worship. The book of Daniel shows Daniel and his friends who risked their life because they would not fall down and worship the golden statue. The Old Testament also contains commandments and warnings about not worshipping gods, and about Solomon and his heart that was led away from God in the end of his life, because his women worshipped other gods. 1 John 4 speaks about testing the spirits. It says that a spirit needs to confess that Jesus has come in the flesh to be from God. It also says that many false prophets have gone out in the world.

God does not want all people to be Christians. This is Hick's claim. He argues this based on the rapid growth of the world population, and on statistics that suggests that the percentage of Christians will decrease in the future. Hick is thus basing his argumentation on reason, and not on the Bible. 1 Timothy 2:3-6 clearly states that God desires all people to be saved. It does not say that God wants all to be Christians, but says that there is one God, and one mediator who is Christ, and that God is our savior. Philippians 10-11 says that every knee shall bow, and that every tongue shall confess Jesus. This shows God's universal desire for all people. In John 14:6 Jesus says that " 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ...' " Acts 4:12 says that Jesus Christ is the only name a person can be saved by. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus commands his followers to make disciples of all nations, and baptizing them in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are to teach them all that Jesus has taught them. This also shows God's desire for all people to become followers of Jesus, in other words, to become Christians.

Hick claims that the same Spirit is behind the different revelations that took place at different times, and for different people. He claims that the revelations are different because they were intended for different people and for different times, and different locations. 1 John 4:1-3 says that every spirit that confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God, and that every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. Other religions do not confess Jesus, and do not confess Jesus coming in the flesh. The exception might be Islam, that see Jesus as a prophet being sent from God. Galatians 1:7-8 speaks on this, saying that even if an angel came from heaven, confessing a different gospel, he should be cursed. 1 John 4:1-3 also speaks about a spirit not confessing Jesus not being from God, but being from antichrist. The text thus presents two options. A spirit can be from God, or from antichrist. The text also states that many false prophets have gone out, and that one should not trust every spirit. Matthew 10: 1 points out that there are not just good spirits, but also unclean ones. Based on this, it is not biblical that the different revelations are from the same Spirit as Hick claims.

The Bible also speaks about humans being different, but gives a different answer than Hick. It speaks about God wanting all people to be saved, and knowing him. It speaks about people having different gifts and about the same Spirit giving different gifts. The Bible also speaks about the fellowship of Christians being the body of Christ, and being different parts on the body, and thus functioning differently (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4-12; Rom. 12:4-8)

Hick wants a Copernican revolution and wants an end to other religions being measured according to Christianity. Hick grounds this in other religions carrying true piety and devotion, and claims that one can know more about these religions now than one did before. Hick claims that the religions reflect God in different ways. The core here is whether one can say that these different religions reflect God in different ways, and whether the different religions do worship the same God as Hick claims. Genesis 1 shows that man and woman are to reflect God. The Bible also talks about Jesus being the image of the invisible God. (Col. 1:15) Hick's claim that the different religions reflect the same God lacks biblical grounding. It is then no need for a Copernican revolution.

Hick gives special attention to two different passages. These are "I and the Father are one", and "No one comes to the Father, but by me". Hick claims that there has not been consensus

on how to interpret these passages between different schools, and not through the ages. Hick here raises an important question.

Hick uses Wolfhart Pannenberg, that claims that Jesus being the Messiah is the work of the post-easter community. 1 John 2:22 says : “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.” Christ is the Greek word for Messiah. The Bible thus states the need to believe that Jesus is Christ, and connects a denial of this to antichrist.

Dr. Ben Witherington 3rd have responded to Hick’s claims. He claims to have studied primitive material that is safe from legendary work. Witherington disagrees with Hick and says that Jesus saw himself as the Son of God, the Son of Man, and as the final Messiah. He also says that Jesus had to come as a human in order to save the human race. Witherington points to Mark 10:45 where Jesus says he has come to give his life as a ransom. (Strobel, 2016, 207) He says that John gives an interpreted picture of Jesus, but that “...I also believe it’s logical drawing out of what was implicit in the historical Jesus.” (Strobel, 2016, 204) He also says that even if one only looks at the three other gospels, one cannot find a non-messianic Jesus. (Strobel, 2016, 204)

William Lane Craig comments on this topic in his book *Reasonable Faith*. “...Craig points to a substantial amount of evidence that within twenty years of the crucifixion there was a full-blown Christology proclaiming Jesus as God incarnate.” (Strobel, 2016, 205) The Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan claims that old sources refer to Jesus as Lord and God. These sources are the oldest liturgical prayer, the oldest pagan report of the church, the oldest account of a Christian martyr, and the oldest Christian sermon. (Strobel, 2016, 205)

Hick uses some Biblical material in his work, however it is quite limited, and mostly on surface level. He quotes only two Scriptures, and use these in his argumentation, and goes deep and detailed concerning these verses. He uses another authority because he says he cannot enter the NT criticism himself. Hick also uses prayers from other religions when arguing. It seems like Hick gives these texts from other religions the same authority as he gives the Bible in his argumentation. Hick also uses reason when arguing.

3.2.2 Coherence

Hick's system does for the most part contain inner coherence. He can however be critiqued for lacking inner coherence in a few cases. Hick says that there are very many different humans, and because of this, there will always be a variety of ways of practicing religion. Hick here assumes that because humans are different, they need to practice different religions. This conclusion does not logically and naturally follow from Hick's premise. There are also different alternative answers that can be given than the need for different religions. Hick's statement is thus lacking inner coherency.

God revealing himself to four centers of civilization does not guarantee all people groups being reached. Still today there are people groups that are remote and hard to reach. Four centers of civilization, and different revelations given in different times would reach more people, however it does not guarantee every person being reached. It does not solve the problem.

3.2.3 Relevance

Hick compares worship services from different religions, and say they are essentially the same. It seems like he does this from outward observations and draws the conclusion from the many similarities he finds, and not on Scripture. Worship services may have similarities, but worship services are about worshipping God, a god or gods. Hick presumes that essentially the same thing is happening based on the outwards.

Hick says that the different religions have changed a lot during the years. This seems like everything is up for grabs. Christianity has changed, however the Apostles Creed and the Nicene creed are very much at use. 1 Corinthians 15 contains some verses that were written only some years after the resurrection. This is still central to the Christian faith.

All efforts of trying to state the incarnation in a factual and literal way have been labeled as heretical states Hick. Hick thus draws the conclusion that the incarnation cannot be understood in a literal and factual way, and that it needs to be understood as a metaphor.

By this, Hick presumes that God can be described fully in human terms and with human language. God is transcendental, and one can use human language to say that God is like a father, but this does not mean that God is like a human father in every way. Apophatic theology or negative theology states this.

In the fourth century there was a controversy that is relevant to Hick's view on the incarnation. Arius claimed that Jesus was a created being, however the greatest one. Athanasius on the other hand said that Jesus being divine is central to salvation. He said that if Jesus was not fully God, he could not save humans. Arius view and Arianism was declared to be heretical. (McGrath, 2010, 17) (McGrath, 2013, 25) Hick says that the incarnation should be understood as a metaphor, and not in a literal way. Hick does however not say anything about how Jesus can save if he is not God incarnate. The debate shows the need for Jesus to be God in order to save humans.

Hick does not see Jesus as one dying for one's sins and saving this way, but says that his presence puts us into God's presence. The salvation is here seen as Jesus being the contact point between God and man, but it does not seem like Jesus is paying a prize. Then Jesus is not seen as atoning, and Hick does not show the need for it. Hick does not speak of original sin here. Hick focuses on Jesus as a contact point, and about the presence. He simply says that the incarnation has no literal meaning. Hick's Jesus probably didn't need to come to redeem humans, at not least in flesh. Hick sees it as enough that it is a poetic picture.

Hick claims that different religions worship the same God. He also claims that the incarnation should be understood as a metaphor, and Hick does not speak on original sin, and it seems like there is no need for Jesus' atoning death on the cross. He also questions the identity of Jesus. Hick is thus irrelevant for the Christian community, seeing important Christian doctrines different than the Christian tradition sees it.

Hick might be perceived as relevant in the culture. He speaks of tolerance, and claims that other religions should not be measured according to Christianity. He says that different religions are valid paths to the same God, and that other religions can save. Hick thus fails to be of relevance for both the Christian fellowship and the culture or present discussion. He should thus be seen as irrelevant.

3.3 Rahner

3.3.1 Bible criterion

It is Biblical that Christianity understands itself as the absolute and universal religion as Rahner claims. John 14:6 speaks about Jesus being the only way to God, and about Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life. Acts 4:12 states that there is no other name under heaven that one can be saved by. John 3:36 says that the one who believes Jesus has eternal life, and the Bible contains verses that show the universality of Jesus. (Phil 2:10-11; Matt. 28:18-20; John 3:16) Rahner's statement about Christianity understanding itself to be the absolute and universal religion is thus Biblical.

Rahner says that religions contain natural knowledge of God. Romans 1:19-20 speak about God having revealed his divine nature and eternal power in things that have been made. The verse also states that God has revealed himself this way ever since the creation of the world. Rahner's claim about religions containing natural knowledge of God can thus be regarded as Biblical.

Rahner says that a lawful religion contains "...supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ" (Rahner, 1983, 293). Rahner says that one can attain God's grace through supernatural and grace filled elements in other religions. The Bible does not say anything about grace filled elements in other religions, and Rahner is thus not able to ground his claims in the Bible. The New Testament says that God's grace has been revealed to salvation for all people, and that one is saved by grace, through faith. (Titus 2:11; Eph. 2:4-9) It also speaks about getting access to the grace through faith in Jesus. (Rom. 5:1-2) It speaks about being saved through Christ's grace, and about getting access to the grace through faith in Jesus. (John 1:14-18; Acts 15:11; Rom 5:1-2) The Bible thus connects grace, faith and salvation, and this cannot be found in Rahner. It seems like Rahner disconnects the grace from Christ, and it is an independent item.

The Biblical view is that all humans have sinned, and are separated from God, who is holy. The wages of sin is death, and this is what humans deserve. Jesus Christ is God and man, and takes away the sin of the world by suffering the consequences and paying for the sin by dying on the cross. By faith in him, humans are saved from death, and can have eternal life with God. This is God's grace, that humans can receive. Humans don't get what they deserve, but are saved, and gets to be with God.

Rahner says that a lawful religion, or in other words a non-Christian religion, can have a positive effect on a person's relationship to God. This is a very different view than what can be found in both the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains very many commands not to worship other gods. The Israelites were not to marry people of other religions. This was in order to not get influenced by their spouse and end up worshipping their god. The New Testament speaks about unclean spirits and about these spirits making people sick, deaf, and possessed. These examples are not necessarily institutional religions as Rahner puts as a criterion of a lawful religion. It is important to note however, that what can be found in both the Old Testament and New Testament concerning other religions, even though the word religion is not used, are contrary to Rahner's view. It does not show gods or spirits to help in the relationship to God, but rather being destructive, and pulling a person further away from God. What can be found is God using Gentile Christians to make the Jews jealous, in order to bring them back to him. This is however different. Rahner's view lacks Biblical grounding, and it is not Biblical to say that non-Christian religions can have a positive effect on a person's relationship to God.

Rahner also goes further, and claims that a person must be able to have a saving relationship to God through the religion that was at disposal in the sphere of existence for a person. At the same time he claims that there is only one salvation, and that is the salvation in Christ. Acts 4:12 and John 14:6 speaks about Jesus being the only salvation, and this is Biblical. Rahner's claim about a person being saved through another religion that was at disposal where the person lived lacks Biblical foundation. This claim cannot be founded in the Scriptures, and it is not biblical. Rahner here goes beyond what Scripture says.

Rahner says that if the second thesis is correct, then non-Christians should be seen as anonymous Christians. These are people who themselves do not profess or know they are

Christians, however Rahner claims they are anonymous Christians. The Bible speaks about believing and confessing Christians, and this is far away from anonymous Christians. (Rom 10:9) Matthew 10:32-33 says that “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” The Bible also talks about calling upon the Lord and being saved. The Bible thus stresses the importance of expressing the faith.

Rahner’s notion of anonymous Christians cannot be said to be Biblical.

Rahner says that God has given the salvation through Jesus. He does not speak about the person believing but detaches the salvation as something that is handed out, and is not tied to faith in Jesus. Rahner says that God has not just given the possibility of salvation, but that he has given the salvation.

Rahner says that the salvation in Christ was intended for the millions of people who lived before Christ, and for the people who live after Christ, but lack the knowledge of him.

Matthew 8:11 speaks of people coming from the east and west and being seated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in heaven. They lived prior to Christ, and the passage shows them making it to heaven. The Bible does however praise Abraham for his faith, and says that he was counted as righteousness because of his faith. (Gal. 3:6) Galatians also seems to say that the gospel was preached to Abraham in saying “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” (Gal 3:8) 1 Peter 4:5-6 speaks of the gospel being preached to the dead ones. This can be used in claiming it is Biblical that Christ is the salvation for the people living before Christ. There are however not many verses claiming this in the Bible, and it can be understood in other ways as well. The Bible does neither contain many verses speaking about those who have not heard. It might be helpful to look at the great commission in Matthew 28, where Jesus commands his followers to share the gospel with all nations. Other relevant biblical material is God being good and a righteous judge. The Bible does also speak about being judged according to how much one knows. Rahner’s argument might be Biblical, however it is not adequate to draw final conclusions from it.

Rahner says that Christians must proclaim and believe that God wants all people to be saved, which is Biblical. Further Rahner says that Jesus has won the salvation, and this is also Biblical. Then Rahner says that Jesus has won the salvation of supernatural grace. It is Biblical

that the salvation is by supernatural grace, however when Rahner states it this way, it seems like supernatural grace is the goal. The Bible conveys that one is saved by grace, but this is not the goal in itself. The goal is fellowship with God, and this is by grace.

Rahner uses God-pleasing pagans in the Old Testament, and Paul's speech at the Areopagus to show that there are differences within non-Christian religions. God-pleasing pagans, or God-fearers did worship God, as the Jews did. Paul at the Areopagus calls the men there very religious, but he does not affirm that they worship the same God. Paul said that he had walked around and found an inscription of an alter that said, "to the unknown god". The English Standard Version has god written with a small letter, while the Norwegian 2011³ version uses a capital letter. The inscription shows however that they did not know God. Some verses earlier shows that there were many idols in the city of Athens that were being worshipped, and that this made Paul upset. The verses prior also shows that Jews and God-fearers met in the synagogue. (Acts 17:16-17) The men Paul addressed at the Areopagus should therefore be understood as worshipping a god, and not God. Rahner is not right in saying that Paul did not exclude a positive view of the pagan religion. He is however right claiming that the God-pleasing pagans, or the God-fearers should be understood different than those people of other religions. They were gentiles by nature, but worshipped God.

It is not Biblical to change one's religion so that one can be a part of the religion in the culture, in order to have the social aspect of religion. The Bible shows Israel as a covenant people, and Christians as living together in fellowship. It also shows disciples who had to flee because of persecution, and who spread the gospel. They did not change to the religion of the people where they fled to. The Bible also speaks of Moses with the burning bush, who had an encounter with God alone. About Jacob who had a dream where God spoke to him. Daniel and his friends did not change religion, but risked their life, by not worshipping any other god. The social element is a part of the Christian faith, but Rahner here takes it too far, claiming that one should take the religion the culture provides, in order to have the social aspect. Rahner here defines by himself what is most important. The Bible shows that it is

³ Bibelselskapet

more important to worship the one God, than to have a fellowship, even though this too is important.

Rahner claims that Christians have not paid enough attention and have not seen the grace filled elements in other religions. By this, Rahner tries to tie it to observations. He does however lack a biblical foundation for his belief. Rahner also speaks about the hostility towards Christians as not going away until Christ returns, and that Christians need to learn to endure this. This is Biblical. Some of Rahner's claims are biblical, while others cannot be rooted in the Bible. The Bible is Jesus centered, and Rahner seems to be more centered on Christianity as a religion and institution, rather than on Christ himself.

3.3.2 Coherence

Rahner manages to incorporate original sin into his system. This strengthens the inner coherence of his system. He also speaks on grace, which is another important Christian doctrine. Rahner uses the term grace, however he does not keep grace connected to Christ, but dislocates it from him, and it stands in a way by itself. It can thus not be said to be rooted in Christ. He thus uses the same word that have been used in Christianity, but it does not contain the same meaning when Rahner uses it.

Rahner claims that non-Christian religions can function as lawful religions until the gospel becomes a real historical fact in the history and culture of an individual. It can thus be questioned how easy it would be to set this boundary. Is it when one missionary moves to a village, but has not shared the gospel yet? Or does it occur when one person has heard the gospel, but not everyone in the village? It does not seem like Rahner's criterion is as easy to use in real life. It seems like the criterion is specific, however it is hard to pinpoint at what exact moment when a non-Christian religion can function as a lawful religion, and when it cannot. It also does not necessarily lead to everyone having heard the gospel, and not everyone having received a sufficient introduction.

Rahner states many if-claims. He says that salvation is something Christian. He says that there is no salvation outside Christ. Divinization of man is given as a gift, and one cannot

attain this through works. God has intended salvation for everyone. These statements do not naturally lead to his conclusion. His conclusion is not the only possible alternative of his premises. His conclusion is

...every human being is really and truly exposed to the influence of divine, supernatural grace which offers an interior union with God and by means of which God communicates himself whether the individual takes up an attitude of acceptance or of refusal towards this grace. (Rahner, 1983, 294-5)

It does not naturally and logically follow from his premises that every person is exposed to the influence of the divine and supernatural grace. Rahner's argument is thus incoherent.

Rahner also says that a person must be able to have a possibility to enter into a genuine and saving relationship to God in all times and in all situations of the history of the human. He says that if this is not the case, then God does not have a serious and effective salvific design for all men. He says that

If, however, man can always have a positive, saving relationship to God, and if he always had to have it, then he has always had it within that religion which in practice was a disposal by being a factor in his sphere of existence. (Rahner, 1983, 298)

Rahner here concludes that man must be able to have a saving relationship to God through a religion that was at disposal in his sphere of existence. Rahner's conclusion does not naturally and logically follow from his premises and is thus incoherent. His conclusion here is not adequate, and this is not the only way God could have arranged this. God could have used general revelation, spoken to men in dreams, visions, or used other means.

3.3.3 Relevance

Rahner describes the changes happening in the world in a way that makes him relevant for the Christian fellowship, as well as the present discussion. He says that because of the globalization, everybody is the next-door neighbor of everyone else, and that religions that were before connected to strangers and people far off, are seen as a possibility for oneself.

Rahner says that Christianity is the absolute religion, and says that this is self-evident to how Christianity views itself. He does not see the need to prove it. This might be well taken by the Christian fellowship, however might not be so well received in the culture. The culture might not see it as self-evident, and it might come across as arrogant, especially since Rahner says there is no need to prove it. Hick does not however see Christianity as the absolute religion, and it is thus not self-evident for him.

Rahner claims that people belonging to a lawful religion should be seen as anonymous Christians. This notion is very different from the confessing Christian, and it will not be well received by the major Christian fellowship. It would probably not be well received by a person belonging to another religion and might sound arrogant. An example would be Rahner claiming that a Muslim is not really a Muslim, but is a Christian, he just doesn't know it yet. Rahner thus claim other people have opinions which they don't have, and this is not an honest approach.

Rahner can be relevant for the Christian community and for the present discussion in asking hard questions. He addresses the topic of what happens to people who have not heard about Jesus in this time, as well as what happened to people who lived prior to Christ.

Overall, Rahner fails to be relevant to the Christian fellowship. Rahner uses the term grace in another way than it has been used by the Christian fellowship, and in an unorthodox way. This, as well as his notion of anonymous Christians, makes him not relevant for the Christian fellowship. As for the present discussion, he is not relevant either, seeing other religions as below Christianity, and saying people of other faiths really belong to Christianity. Rahner is however relevant regarding questioning what happens to those who have never heard.

3.4 Kraemer

3.4.1 Bible

Kraemer states that testimonies should not be seen as unscientific but should belong to the scientific study. The Bible does however contain a great deal of testimonies. The book of Acts contains many testimonies, and so does the gospels. Paul's conversion is an important testimony in the Bible, as well as the testimonies of people meeting Jesus alive days after his death on the cross. Testimonies are portrayed as important in the Bible, and Kraemer also points to the importance of testimonies

Accurate knowledge is always incomplete is Kraemer's claim. 1 Corinthians 13:10 and 13:12 also speaks about this. It speaks about only seeing part of the pieces now, but in the future seeing the whole picture. Kraemer's claim is thus Biblical.

Kraemer says that Jesus puts himself as the criterion, because he says the truth is revealed in Jesus. Kraemer points to John 14:6b which says " ' I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' ". Kraemer also uses John 1:17 that says that grace and truth comes from Jesus. Kraemer's claim about Jesus being the truth, and that the truth is revealed in him is Biblical. Jesus as the only criterion to truth is one step further than the Bible passage conveys. However, if Jesus shows what is true, and something is contrary to this, he can be said to be the only criterion. If there is claim that Jesus does not say anything on, it might be hard to say that he is the only criterion one can use to judge between truth and false.

Using Jesus as a criterion demands having a living communion with Jesus. Kraemer says that the quality of the judgement demands on the communion. There is a parallel between this, and of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 and 2:14-15. The text speaks about the Spirit exploring the depths in God, about God revealing by his Spirit, and about matters that can only be judged in spiritual ways. It also says that the person who has the Spirit can judge everything. Kraemer also references Paul's conversion experience by speaking about scales falling off. Paul changed from persecuting Christians, to preaching the gospel. The reason was encountering Jesus.

Kraemer says that a person coming to Christ must openly confess Christ. This is also the New Testament's view on this matter. Romans 10:9 speaks on this, as well does Matthew 10:32-33. Kraemer's claim is thus Biblical.

1 Corinthians 1:30 speaks of Christ being the wisdom of God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Kraemer says that other religions are a quest for self-justification, self-sanctification, and self-redemption. He draws on Paul, who addresses the topic of faith and law, and says that one cannot attain self-deliverance through self-justification. Kraemer is right in this. The New Testament says that good works is the result or fruit of faith, but that one cannot be justified or saved through good works.

Kraemer says that God is still in covenant with Israel, and uses Romans 11:17 in speaking about the Church as a branch grafted onto God's tree. The tree is the covenant with Israel. It is true that God is still in covenant with Israel, however the New Testament speaks of the true children of Abraham as connected through faith, and not through blood.

Kraemer says that the gospel is universal, and that the church should proclaim the message about Jesus to every nation, and that this also includes Israel and Muslims. Kraemer uses Matthew 28, and says that Jesus presents himself as the way, the truth and life. He also says that one is converted to Christ, and not to Christianity. Jesus demands total surrender, and the New Testament speaks about taking up one's cross daily. It is not enough to just incorporate some elements. This is also the New Testaments understanding of what Jesus demands, and on mission.

Kraemer says that one can find demonic elements in other religions, as well as God having revealed himself. He points to Peter's satanic lapse, the Roman ruler who showed exemplary faith, as well as Nathanael's upright heart. Based on these Scriptures, I think it is more appropriate to draw the conclusion that Christians can be tempted by the devil or by their flesh. Also, that one should not write people off, and think that they will not believe, because the Roman ruler showed more faith than the Jews. One can however use Romans 1:19-20 to support that God has revealed himself, and that traces of God's revelation can be found in other religions.

Kraemer speaks of two possible outcomes when it comes to Jesus. One option is faith and surrendering. The other option is taking offense. The New Testament also shows people responding to Jesus this way. Revelation 3:15-16 speaks about being hot or cold, and not lukewarm. The Bible does portray two possible outcomes. Deuteronomy 30:15-18 also speaks about choosing between two options, life or death. It connects life with following God, and death with departing from God, and worshipping other gods. Psalm 1 also speaks about two different paths one can take in life. At the same time, there are cases where people want to hear more. This is the case with Paul at the Areopagus. Some people here respond with wanting to hear more another day. The Bible also speaks of seeking and finding.

Kraemer uses John 17:3, and says that Scripture sums it up in this. It talks about the eternal life, and that this is knowing God, and the one God has sent, who is Jesus Christ. He thus also defines salvation in a Biblical way and defines what is meant by salvation.

Kraemer uses many Bible references, and mostly use the Bible in a good way. This is a great strength for his view.

3.4.2 Coherence

Kraemer claims that Jesus is the truth and that Jesus is the only criterion that should be used to evaluate Christianity and other religions. He says that a person's view of Jesus will affect what that person finds, and one's judgement. It thus seems to follow that by using Jesus as the criterion, different people can get different answers. Kraemer also points this out. This thus leads to the criterion giving different answers depending on who uses it. This raises some questions to how adequate the criterion is by itself.

Kraemer manages to incorporate the doctrine of original sin in a good way. He also incorporates grace, and distinguishes grace in Christianity from grace found in other religions based on what is meant by the word grace. He does not assume grace meaning the same, but distinguishes the Christian notion of grace from the non-Christian. He is thus coherent with the Christian tradition and incorporating these doctrines strenghtens his system.

Testimonies in the Bible are important, however not every claimed testimony made it to the Bible. There were some criteria that was used in the process of recognizing the canon of the Bible. Testimonies are important and should be seen this way, however, they should be evaluated in some way. This way true testimonies can be distinguished from false ones. Testimonies are also in danger of becoming too subjective and are also in danger of becoming too much effected by historical and personal matters, which Kraemer points out concerning theological work.

Kraemer stresses the importance of knowing Jesus. He says one needs to go back to what produced Christianity. Kraemer also points to the importance of revelation. It is however noteworthy that the revelation is found in the Bible, and the Bible also shows who Jesus is. It is important that a person knows Jesus personally, as Kraemer points out, however the Bible is needed to get to know Jesus and God's revelation.

3.4.3 Relevance

Kraemer manages to be of relevance for the Christian fellowship. He uses Bible verses frequently, and his system is mostly Biblical. He also addresses the issue of how Jesus is different than the other religions in a clear and understandable way. Kraemer says that the other religions give other answers to the fundamental questions. He also says that Jesus is the revelation in his own person and is the truth, and other religions are a quest for self-justification, self-sanctification and self-deliverance. Kraemer says that other religions are not able to give a sufficient account of original sin. Kraemer does however not manage to be as relevant in the present discussion. He claims that all religions are in error in their essence, and this can come across as offensive. He also says that Jesus is the only criterion, and that one needs to have a living communion with Jesus, in order to use him as the criterion. By this he excludes many people from using this criterion, that is the only criterion one can use according to him. He thus excludes many people from taking part in the discussion. His distinction between religion and revelation and claim that revelation is not a part of religion could also come across as offensive by the culture.

Kraemer claims that theological work should not be seen as normative, because it constantly needs to be revised because theologians change in how they think and feel. This might be relevant in the debate in the society, and well received. However when it comes to the Christian fellowship, it might not necessarily be received well. Christian doctrines are an important part of Christianity, and expand on the most central elements of the Christian faith. Different debates have occurred through the ages, and creeds have been written after long discussions among many different theologians. These states what is the truth, and condemns indirectly or directly what is unorthodox. Work by theologians in the Christian fellowship are seen as important and as valuable. The Christian fellowship is open for revision if there is a good enough reason. This is different from Kraemer's constant revision. Kraemer says that this work cannot be seen as normative, and by this, he does not acknowledge the authority of the theologians who have gone before him.

Kraemer says that the church should proclaim the message about Jesus to every nation, including the Jews. This is relevant for the Christian fellowship, and especially since he addresses that this should be done, even though there might be different emotions connected to this because of the history. It might not come across as open minded and tolerant, but as arrogant, claiming that only Christians have the answer, and that everyone else is mistaken.

4 Discussion

4.1 General comparison

Through their work, each theologian focuses on different elements in Christianity. Hick sees God as the most important, and stresses God in his work. Kraemer sees Jesus as the most important, and claims that everything must be judged according to Jesus. For Rahner, it is Christianity itself that is in focus.

Both Rahner and Kraemer incorporates original sin into their system, however Hick does not mention it. It seems like he does not need Jesus to die on the cross, but that Jesus is understood as a bridge, connecting the humans in the world to God who is transcendent.

Hick claims that God is the same in Christianity and in Islam, and points to the similarities. Kraemer however claims that God in Christianity and Allah cannot be the same because they are too different. They thus argue for two complete different views.

Kraemer says that one should look for traces of God having revealed himself in other religions. Rahner speaks of grace from Jesus being in other religions, and about being able to have a saving relationship with God through another religion. Hick sees the same Spirit being behind the different religions, but the need for multiple and different revelations to reach different times, places and people.

4.2 Bible, Hick, Rahner and Kraemer

Kraemer is the theologian who uses the Bible most frequently and quotes different Bible passages. He mostly uses the Bible in a good way. Many of Rahner's claims are biblical, however he develops his arguments beyond this, and end up with conclusions that can not be founded in the Bible, and some that are contrary to the Bible. Hick is the theologian who's work is the least Biblical. He uses some biblical material, however it is on surface level. Hick leaves out the full picture of who God is, and choose to focus on the attributes God has in common with gods in other religions. Hick also gives authority to not only the Bible, but to sacred texts in other religions.

4.3 Coherence, Hick, Rahner and Kraemer

Hick comes off strong when it comes to inner coherence in his system. Kraemer does also come across quite strong regarding inner coherence, yet not as strong as Hick. Kraemer says that Jesus is the only criterion of truth that should be used when making judgements however this criterion can give different answers when it comes to truth. The reason is that a person's relationship to Jesus effects what a person finds. Rahner is the theologian who shows the weakest inner coherency. He draws conclusions that does not naturally and logically follow his premises. His conclusions are also not the only ones that can be drawn as a result of his premises.

4.4 Relevance

Kraemer manages to clearly state the difference between Jesus and other religions in a way that is of relevance to the Christian fellowship. He also stresses the need for missionary work, and mostly use the Bible in a good way. He can however be critiqued for separating Christ from Christianity in a way that is not well received by the Christian fellowship. When it comes to being of relevance for the community, or present discussion, Kraemer is irrelevant. He states that all religions are essentially in error, which will not be well received. He also says that Jesus is the only criterion that can be used to make judgements, and that using him as a criterion demands a fellowship with Christ. By this Kraemer, excludes many people from taking part in the discussion, because they are unable to use the only criterion.

Rahner is irrelevant for both the Christian fellowship, as well as to the culture. It probably comes across as arrogant that Rahner claims that people of other religions don't really belong to the religion they themselves claim they belong to, but that they are really Christians, and that Rahner knows best. This would not be well received by the Christian fellowship either. Rahner here says that people who themselves don't confess to be Christians, should be seen as Christians. This goes against the traditional understanding of being a Christian. Rahner does however point out an important theological issue. That is the issue of what happens to the people before Christ, and to the people who has not heard about Christ.

Hick is not irrelevant to the Christian fellowship. He views the incarnation metaphorical, does not need the atoning death of Jesus, and questions the identity of Jesus. He also says that other religions worship the same God the Christians worship, and that other religions are valid paths to salvation. Hick does however raise an important question that should be seen as relevant for the Christian fellowship. That it the question of how to deal with passages where there is no consensus through the ages, and through different schools of thought. Hick is however of relevance to the culture. Hick speaks about tolerance, and of not only Christianity being the truth, but of many different paths that are just as valid. Hick does however raise some important questions that should be of relevance.

5 Conclusion

How should one view other religions from a Christian perspective? Hick claims that the different religions should be seen as valid paths, and that different religions worship the same God. He sees the different religions as having overlapping images of God, and says that the same Spirit has given multiple revelations for different people, and at different times, and that they are therefore different. He also claims that Jesus brings humans into presence with God who is transcendental, and that other religions can save and can have knowledge of God. Hick's uses the least Biblical material, and relates mostly on surface level to the Biblical material. He also bases his picture of God on parts of the Bible, and not on the whole Bible. Hick gives authority to other religious texts, and it seems like he gives them equal amount of authority as the Bible. Inner coherency in Hick is quite strong, however he is irrelevant to the Christian fellowship questioning the identity of Jesus, viewing the incarnation as a metaphor and lacking both the original sin and the need for atonement. Hick is however of relevance for the culture, stressing tolerance and different religions as valid paths. Hick's view is not Biblical, and he therefore does not provide a Christian perspective on other religions.

Rahner says that Christianity is the absolute religion, and that Christ is the only salvation. Rahner speaks of lawful religions and sees other religions as containing supernatural and grace filled elements on account of Christ. A religion in a person's sphere of existence can have positive effect on that person's relationship to God, and have a saving relationship to God through that religion. This changes when the gospel becomes a historical factor in an individuals existence. Then it is only Christianity that is the religion which can save. Some of Rahner's claims are biblical, however he goes further than the biblical texts, and ends up with arguments that cannot be rooted in the Bible, and even some arguments that are contrary to the Bible. Rahner is the weakest of the theologians when it comes to inner coherency and is irrelevant to both the culture and Christian fellowship in speaking about

anonymous Christians. Rahner also fails to provide a sufficient view of other religions from a Christian perspective.

Kraemer sees Jesus as the only way to salvation, and says that all religions, Christianity included, must be judged according to Jesus. Kraemer says that one should search after God having revealed himself in other religions. He says one should also search for evidence of truth and value in other religions, as well as paying attention to the demonic and devilish in other religions. Kraemer uses many biblical references, and mostly uses the Bible in a good way. He can be criticized for his criterion of Jesus, as this possibly resulting in different answers. Kraemer is relevant in explaining the difference between Jesus and the other religions in a clear way for the Christian fellowship. He can be criticized here for separating Christ from Christianity, and for being irrelevant for the culture, saying that Jesus is the only criterion, and that using this criterion demands a living fellowship with him. Kraemer provides overall the best way to view other religions based on the Bible, coherence and relevance, even though his view can be critiqued on multiple points. One should then view other religions from a Christian perspective as Kraemer does on these following points: Other religions should be seen as ultimately being in error giving different answers to fundamental questions, being a quest for self-justification, self-deliverance and self-sanctification. Jesus is the revelation in his own person, and this distinguishes him from the other religions.

Jesus should be seen as the revelation in his own person, distinguishing himself from the other religious founders who only brings a revelation. Judaism should be treated on its own and should not be treated under the category of other religions. The Jews were the original branches of the tree of God, however they also need to believe and receive Jesus. Islam have too different view on God, and cannot be said to worship the same God as Christian does. Other religions should be seen as being able to perform supernatural acts, but not this does not come from Christ, but come from unclean spirits or forces. Other religions should be seen as being able to contain demonic elements, but also noble and good elements, as well as great people. These other religions can however not save. Jesus is the only one who can save, and this is because of his work on the cross and resurrection. It requires belief and confessing, as well as receiving. The message of Christ is excluding in saying that Jesus is the

only way to God, however it is including in inviting everyone to come to him. Jesus has given his followers a command to share the gospel of the good news to the whole earth. It is then a crucial question how this can be done in the best way.

Litterature

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