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„Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ Re-visited:
An Encounter of Walter Cardinal Kasper's Spirit Christology
with the Indian Theology in the Light of *Ecclesia in Asia*.
An Attempt to Focus on and Deepen the Specificity of
Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India"

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Rathan ALMEIDA

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Rathan Nicholas Almeida, OCD

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	*Ad Gentes divinitus*
Cath	*Catholica*
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CONC	*Concilium*
DH	*Dignitatis Humanae*
DI	*Dominus Iesus*
DV	*Dei Verbum*
EA	*Ecclesia in Asia*
EAPR	East Asian Pastoral Review
ET	English Translation
FABC	Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences
GS	*Gaudium et Spes*
IkaZ	*Internationale katholische Zeitschrift*
ISPCK	Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
ITA	Indian Theological Association
ITC	International Theological Commission
KuD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
LG	*Lumen Gentium*
NA	*Nostra Aetate*
NTS	New Testament Studies
OT	*Optatam Totius*
OTC	Office of Theological Commission
QD	*Quaestiones Disputatae*
RH	*Redemptor Hominis*
RM	*Redemptoris Missio*
SC	*Sacrosanctum Concilium*
SCM	Student Christian Movement

SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
StdZ	*Stimmen der Zeit*
ThG	*Theologie der Gegenwart*
ThPQ	*Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*
ThQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*
TS	Theological Studies
UR	*Unitatis Redintegration*
VJTR	Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection
ZEE	*Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik*
ZThK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

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INTRODUCTION

As I was preparing to leave India to pursue my studies, one of my companions curiously enquired about the area of my research. No sooner had he heard that I would be purusing my studies in Christology, than he absurdly remarked, "What more is left to research on Jesus Christ?" Although at the very outset this sounded reasonable, later however, I reflected on the words of St. Paul who wrote in his letter to the Ephesians, that he is given the grace of bringing to the Gentiles "the news of the boundless riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). The boundless riches of Christ need to be brought to fruition to answer the needs of the times as the world at present is longing for peace and harmony.

On the day of my departure, another companion who accompanied me to the airport, made the following request, "Please write something meaningful and concrete for our spiritual life and human existence, especially for the Indian context." Welcoming his request with great pleasure, I thanked him for this valuable suggestion. It was almost certain that the person of Jesus Christ and the universal salvation he offers would be the area of my research.

Christology: The choice of my research

Christian theology and tradition claims that, in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, the revelation of God, in a unique and final way, is definitive and complete (Heb 1:1f). Jesus, therefore, occupies a central and unique place in the history of the world, a place no other religions attribute to their founders. Jacques Dupuis beautifully writes, "the Message and the Messenger blend into one. Christianity is a religion of a person, the Christ."[1] Though the Second Vatican Council assures that the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions, the Council further gives clear guidelines that the Church is bound to "proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life" (NA 2). Christ, therefore, remains the *norma normans non normata*, the norm above all other norms.

[1] J. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 94.

No Christology can claim to be complete and ever new. Every Christology somehow engages itself in dialogue with both, the predecessors and the contemporaries, underlining some tiny but significant elements useful for the present time. Though every Christology begins with the same familiar story being narrated since the origin of Christianity, it has, however, something new to offer to the modern era. In order to bring out the 'something new and relevant,' one has to look into the context in which theologising is being done, by whom and for whom it is being done. This is the reason why I chose Christology for my research work; first and foremost to attempt to explore the personality of Jesus Christ whose life in turn gives meaning to our lives and hope for human existence, and then to probe into the significance of his unique person in the Indian context.

The Scope of the Research

This research work is based on the Spirit Christology of Cardinal Walter Kasper. Kasper, in one of his best theological works *Jesus the Christ*,[2] seeks a Christology constructed from the correlation of the historical Jesus and the proclaimed Christ, hoping that such a Christology could address the malaise of modern man. The Church's crisis of identity versus relevance has become a critical issue in society at the present time. The outer world appears to be neutral and banal and the inner world of individuals seems to be empty and hollow, and in such a situation Kasper believes that the solution is to be found in Christology. The purpose of the incarnation of Jesus, his life, passion, death and resurrection are events that reconcile the world to God and human beings to one another. Yves Congar in his *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* cites Kasper as one of the theologians who has made a beginning "in formulating a Christology based on the intervention of the Holy Spirit in the Mystery of Christ."[3]

From the Indian point of view, the writings of two prominent scholars, Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred, have been chosen for reference and clarification in my efforts to probe into the Indian socio-religious setting. Both these distinguished academicians theologise in the context of pluralism of religions and poverty, predominant in the Indian scenario. For India, being a cradle of world religions, understanding and

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[2] Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: Burns and Oates, 1974).

[3] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. I (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1979-1980), 165. Also cf. 171, n. 1 for references to Kasper and other contributions to Pneumatological Christology.

interpreting the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his cosmic salvation is not an easy venture. The task of Christology at the same time is constantly on-going, and we have to wrestle anew especially with the christological problems from one generation to the next. We see this glaringly in the history of Christianity and also in the history of the Church.

The fundamental question relating to Christianity is the identity of the person of Jesus Christ. "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" This is a question explored from the birth of Christianity, is still discussed and debated today in every century, on every continent, and has always had a different answer. Theology needs to be seen in relation to different events and in various socio-cultural and religious setting, since theologising is also influenced by the context. A special reference is also made to the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, which deals with the issue concerning the unicity and universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, and also to *Ecclesia in Asia*, the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation which sheds light on Jesus Christ as the Saviour and on his mission of love and service in Asia.

Methodology

When we speak about religion, culture and traditions, we usually make a distinction between East and West. This makes it easier for the researcher to justify his/her position, naming the other as eastern or western style. It is frequently the practice to identify some flaws in the position of others, which may give the researcher some psychological satisfaction. However, the research work I have undertaken does not belong to such a category. My aim has been to analyse both these theological trends (Western and Asian) sometimes juxtaposing them, but with a view to identifying some essential working principles, helpful for both, West as well as Asia.

In relation to the methodology of this work, the analytic method was chosen as appropriate and has been applied. I have attempted to show that the Christology of Walter Kasper inclines towards Spirit Christology and, taking his Spirit Christology as the basis, the thesis has ventured to probe into some essential christological issues in the Asian/Indian perspective. The essential parts pertaining to the topic are divided into basic elements so that these issues are logically discussed, culminating in concrete and practical

outcomes. Though this was certainly a challenging task, I enjoyed every moment of my time spent in reading, writing and researching.

The first chapter begins with a brief summary giving a general overview of the pre and post Vatican II christological trends and its further growth in different contextual situations. It proceeds to identify the essence of the Christology of Walter Kasper, highlighting succinctly certain specific and significant elements. The theological and christological positions of Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng, Kasper's contemporaries, help to indicate certain emphases that Kasper lays. After locating the different christological positions, this chapter chooses certain christological problems like, the quest for the historical Jesus, *Dominus Iesus*, the question of demythologisation, and religious pluralism. The chapter ends with a brief reference to *Ecclesia in Asia* and its special call to develop a particular pedagogy which would help to appropriate the mystery of Jesus Christ.

The second and third chapters comprehensively discuss the christological position of Walter Kasper who attempts to prove that Jesus is not only divine but also human. His purpose to sketch out the significant events in the life of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is clearly evident. The second chapter concentrates on the motif 'Kingdom of God' and its triple character: eschatological, theological and soteriological. This chapter also makes a general survey of how this leitmotif is being discussed in the post-Conciliar developments and also in the Asian documents, and the difficulties it faces especially in the Church today. It makes clear that the Church is not the Kingdom of God but is at the service of this Kingdom. It further discusses another problematic theme namely, the miracles of Jesus. This theme is not only closely analysed but even the possibilities of miracles are explored. Finally, this chapter proves that miracles are signs of the Kingdom of God and signs of the salvation of the world.

The third chapter is a trilogy, dealing with the passion and death of the Messiah, his glorious resurrection and his titles. The passion of Jesus and the mystery of the cross demonstrate that they have a prominent place in the Christology of Kasper. The eschatological and soteriological perspectives of Jesus' sacrifice give a special meaning to the sacrificial and salvific death of Jesus. Further, the resurrection of Jesus is discussed not only from the historical point of view but also in relation to other spiritual elements,

thus linking the resurrection of Jesus to other christological mysteries. Finally, the risen Christ, the Son of God, is confirmed and designated as the *Kyrios*, the Lord of the universe who brings universal peace and salvation.

The fourth chapter addresses the central issue of the thesis: the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and cosmic salvation. At the very outset, the magisterial teachings of the Church concerning this point of contention are elaborately discussed and the position of the Church is clearly defined. Christology in India and the christological developments in a multi-religious context are outlined. Two prominent theologians, namely, Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred, and their christological positions are presented. The issue of the uniqueness and universal salvation of Jesus Christ has witnessed various theological complexities in the multi-religious and multi-lingual context but is still open for discussion.

The final chapter attempts to draw harmonious conclusions, analysing the points of convergences and divergences between Asian and Western christological endeavours. Such meeting/departure points are discussed in three major areas: highlighting the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his unique mediation, shedding some light on the understanding of salvation in Christianity and other religions and finally ascertaining the need for healthy and harmonious dialogue as a key solution to the entire dispute. The thesis ends with an attempt to design some working principles intended to be helpful and to serve as pedagogy and as a response to *Ecclesia in Asia*.

Sources

In general, there exists a wide range of literature in Christology, particularly in Spirit Christology and on principal themes like the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ and Jesus, the Cosmic Saviour. Besides the writings of these three scholars (Walter Kasper, Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred), and having recourse to other secondary literature and resources, references to Council and Church documents have also been made. A thorough study of Western and Asian religious traditions (especially Christian tradition) has been attempted. I also had the privilege, on two occasions, of personally interviewing Cardinal Walter Kasper during my research work which was enriching and of immense practical benefit. Some correspondence through electronic mails and personal dialogue with some Indian as well as Western theologians proved to be supportive and beneficial.

CHAPTER 1

CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: A CONTEMPORARY VIEW PRELIMINARY REMARKS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Introduction

Walter Kasper, German Roman Catholic Cardinal and systematic theologian, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in the foreword to the new edition of his brilliantly synthesised theological work '*Jesus der Christus*,'[4] states that an extensive preface, introducing a new edition of his previously published work, after 30 years, naturally amounts to high risk. This seems to be logical and fair since, after three decades one could definitely expect a different setting like, growth in theological thinking, developments in different sectors of life, a renewed socio-political, economic and religious setting, from the 1970s when his original book was published. Today's world is filled with critical enquiries and sceptical questionings. Cultural turmoil is prevalent and even religious pluralism seems to deeply affect every sphere of our society. In our present post-Conciliar era, a pressing need is felt especially in ecclesiastical circle for conscious reflection on the essential christological tenets of our faith. On the one hand, many questions concerning the person of Jesus Christ, Christianity, salvation offered by Christ and other religious figures etc., have mushroomed as a whole, and on the other hand, theologians have engaged themselves in exegetical and historical research in order to respond satisfactorily to these emerging issues.

In this chapter an attempt is made to present a very brief survey of the progressive flow in christological thought and research and here focus is drawn on only a few selected thinkers who have made significant contributions to philosophy as well as to theology. This survey will be followed by some reflections from Second Vatican Council regarding Christology, a brief synthesis of Kasper's Spirit Christology and some relevant christological issues.

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[4] Walter Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, Gesammelte Schriften, Band III, ed. George Augustine und Klaus Krämer, (Freiburg: Herder, 2007). The original work in German appeared in 1974 (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag), and it was translated into English by V. Green in 1976 with the title *Jesus the Christ* (London: Burns and Oates, 1976). The lastest English edition has also been published. See *Jesus the Christ* (London: T and T Clark, 2011).

In order to understand the contributions of scholars to the stream of Christology at present, one needs to consider its various stages of development. This brief history narrative on the various stages forms the background for the highlights presented here, which sheds light on the crucial twists and turns which have proven instrumental in shaping Christology during the pre- and post-Vatican Council II eras. This section thus presents a modest survey of the ideas of some significant thinkers in history, a sketch of some major significant shifts which indeed have served as a strong base, timely responding to frequently raised questions in Christology.

1.1 Christology: A New Style with a New Epoch

It is said of Voltaire, the famous French philosopher and author, that in 1774, he and his friend climbed a nearby hill, desiring to see the sun rise. After taking off his hat, Voltaire knelt down and cried, "I believe, I believe in you! Powerful God I believe! As for monsieur Son and Madame His mother, that's a different story."[5] This exclamation, though sounding ironic, encapsulates the essence of the newly emerging world-view of the Enlightenment Era. Further, it asserts that "belief in God was still possible, not because of divine revelations in the Bible, but on the basis of natural religion."[6]

René Descartes'[7] famous principle '*cogito ergo sum*,' symbolizing and encouraging the so- called 'anthropological turn,' shifted its concern to the conscious subject, which in turn deeply affected not only modern Christology but also other branches of theology. Gerald O'Collins explains it: "The consciousness of individual subjects and their experience of themselves and the world have at times become the sole focus of attention and have been turned into the major and even exclusive criterion for christological argument."[8] Even Friedrich Schleiermacher, from the Leibniz, Fichte and the Romantic School, imbibed a profound and mystical view of the inner depths of human personality through his anthropological theology, emphasized the subjective element of the being

[5] As quoted in William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 237.

[6] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 85.

[7] René Descartes (1596 – 1650), a French Philosopher, scientist and mathematician, also popularly called as the Father of Modern Western Philosophy, was the first major figure in rationalism, a philosophical system that used reason as the means to attain knowledge and to understand the world.

[8] Gerald O' Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 212-213.

and thus systematically tried to base all Christian religious truth on the understanding and self-consciousness of the individual. "Eventually he came to interpret faith in terms of the human 'feeling of absolute dependence' (*Gefühl der schlechthinnigen Abhängigkeit*) from God. Hence his Christology revolved around, or was practically reduced to Jesus' unique God-consciousness."[9] John Henry Newman (1801-90), influenced by Cartesian thought, took 'I' and one's consciousness of oneself as his starting point. Hence, he logically concluded that the existence of God was not to be argued on the basis of the external world and reality, but instead grounded on "one's personal existence and the presence of God in the voice of conscience,"[10] a faculty in humans that distinguishes right from wrong, good from evil, metaphorically used to indicate the voice within or God's voice.

Kant, demonstrating the impossibility of metaphysics, challenged classical metaphysics. He argued that "whoever makes claims about such matters as God, the immortality of the soul, and its liberty must first enquire whether such an enterprise is at all possible."[11] Karl Rahner (1904-84) defended a theistic realism, arguing that:

> Human beings and their (metaphysical) questions reveal a drive which leads them beyond the immediate data of the subject's sense perception towards the Absolute. Rahner's Christology of human self-transcendence within an evolutionary view of the world interpreted the incarnation not only as the divine self-communication in the person of the Son but also as *the* limit-case in what is possible to humanity in its dynamic openness to the Absolute.[12]

The so-called one-sided search for utter 'objectivity' created a 'prejudice against prejudice,'[13] which reversed Augustine's axiom of 'believe in order to understand' (*crede ut intelligas*) to read 'if you believe, you will not understand.' One's disinterest for objectivity makes one forget that it shares in the reality outside self and therefore, the process of one's thinking, believing and acting cannot be eliminated. In other words, truth is something that is not really objective, but subjective-objective, best defined in

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[9] O' Collins, *Christology*, 213. For more on Schleiermacher and some notable figures in modern Christology, see. J. Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 175-335.

[10] O' Collins, *Christology*, 213.

[11] O' Collins, *Christology*, 213.

[12] O' Collins, *Christology*, 214. See also Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. W. V. Dych (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 176-321.

[13] See Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, revised edition (London: Sheed and Ward, 1989), 269-272; also see Gerald O' Collins, *Fundamental Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981), 5-14.

Thomistic language as "*Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*" (Truth is the equation of thing and intellect),[14] and realised by contemplating it and living it. O'Collins explains further how at the dawn of the twentieth century, one saw a slight modification in that the natural sciences themselves began to reform the so-called dream of absolute 'objectivity,' and accepted the arrived-at fact that pure objectivity does not exist, not even in physics. He further observes:

> The work of Einstein, Heisenberg, Max Planck (1858-1947), and many other scientists (and philosophers) has fostered the sense that all knowledge is also properly subjective. The role of observers and of the 'instruments' chosen by them is in no way to be disqualified. The results of observations and experiments inevitably depend upon the observers' point of view.[15]

Stirred by his deeper sense of how Christian doctrines had developed over the centuries, John Henry Newman published in 1845, his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.[16] Indeed, "decades before that, Schleiermacher had been the first modern academic to offer lectures on the life of Jesus. He aimed to help his educated contemporaries (the 'cultured despisers') find a new path towards faith in Jesus or at least come to share in Jesus' own 'God-consciousness.'"[17] Astonishingly, in the nineteenth century, liberal Christians or non-believers proclaimed their views of Jesus. He was for them nothing more than a moral reformer or a mere human teacher of wisdom. They used historical data to attenuate orthodoxy in the mysteries of the divine-human Christ and the Church's creeds, causing a serious discrepancy between the real Jesus of history and the New Testament's interpretation of Jesus as a redeemer.

Albert Schweitzer, in his masterpiece, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906, in German), intelligently narrated the story of *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* and pointed out a tragic flaw: "it was not only each epoch that found its reflection in Jesus; each individual

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[14] For more details, refer "Correspondence Theory of Truth," in *Encyclopedias on Philosophy: Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Philosophy Encyclopedia, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (USA: Books LLC), http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-correspondence/ (accessed June 6, 2011).

[15] O' Collins, *Christology*, 215-216.

[16] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1980). Read specially the second (55-98) and the third (99-120) chapters dealing with the antecedent argument in behalf of developments in Christian doctrine and the historical argument in behalf of the existing developments, respectively.

[17] O' Collins, *Christology*, 220.

created Him in accordance with his own character."[18] George Tyrrell (1861-1909) dared to make the same point even more intensely: "the Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen in the bottom of a deep well."[19]

It is to be noted that "the best research on the socio-historical context of Jesus and the first Christians coming from such scholars as John Elliott, Martin Hengel, Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, and Gerd Theissen adds information and insight. But the worst outcome of such research reduces the story of the first Christians to an imaginative reconstruction of their social history, with little or no attention to their religious faith."[20] The religious dimension, even in the activity of Jesus himself, is submerged by talk about his social critique and a countercultural behaviour.[21] Some even find the scapegoat mechanism of René Girard as a key that unlocks the doctrine of redemption in the New Testament.[22]

Many other developments in the twentieth century, especially the Enlightenment, Deism, and the Theory of Evolution have naturally affected the christological climate. The era of Enlightenment was quite authoritative and efficacious, insisting on the use of human reason in opposing divine revelation, including religious traditions and their authority, thus reducing God to a postulate of practical reason. Pure reasoning either denied or marginalised belief in the Trinity and also questioned the Incarnation of Jesus. However, it interpreted Jesus as a wisdom teacher and as the best exemplification of moral perfection. Such a pure sapiential conception of Jesus was fed into the works of many scholars, especially of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) and Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930). The liberal theology of Ritschl "understood Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom as a call to

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[18] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* second edition (London: A and C Black, 1936), 4.

[19] George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Cross-Roads* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 44.

[20] O' Collins, *Christology*, 222-223.

[21] An example could be seen in Burton Mack's, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (Australia: HarperCollins, 1993). In his prologue Mack states that before the gospels came into existence, the first followers of Jesus wrote another kind of book, focusing on the social programmes rather than the person of Jesus, his life and destiny. Cf. O' Collins, *Christology*, 223.

[22] A convenient introduction and some bibliography on Girard's thought can be found in James Alison's *Knowing Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1993). See also René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). He argues that Gospels present themselves as mythical accounts, and that Christianity has desacralised the world.

join an ethical community whose achievements would help to establish the coming reign of God."[23]

In Britain and Ireland, continental Europe and North America, leaders of the Enlightenment offered ideas that often coincided, in fact, with those who called themselves 'deists.' Deism, stressing the role of reason, rejected supernatural elements of religion like divine revelations, biblical miracles, and any divine involvement either in nature or in human history. It welcomed the theory of evolution put forward by Charles Darwin (1809-82) that reasonably explained the origin and appearance of new and higher forms of species, even the evolution of the entire cosmos itself. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* (1859) "aroused bitter opposition from many Christians, who believed it to be irreconcilable and incompatible with the biblical accounts of creation in Genesis."[24] At this juncture, it is worth mentioning Teilhard de Chardin, who embraced and extended Darwin's key insights by interpreting the whole cosmological and human story, from creation to the final consummation.[25]

> His scheme of cosmogenesis, anthropogenesis, and christogenesis detected an evolving spiritualization of matter, in which humanity and the entire universe move toward the final consummation in Christ as the omega-point. Teilhard's evolutionary Christology recognised Christ as the intrinsic goal and purpose of the entire cosmo-historical evolution.[26]

It could be said that European scholars, to a great extent, shared in the one perennial philosophy deriving ultimately from the Greeks. Enthusiastic seekers of Christology now had the problem of choosing between philosophies, often distinguished according to different authors, schools of thought, different stages and phases, like: analytic philosophy, neo-Thomism, idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, pragmatism,

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[23] O' Collins, *Christology*, 216-217. See also John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1991).

[24] O' Collins, *Christology*, 218.

[25] Cf. O' Collins, *Christology*, 217-218. Also see Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Der Mensch im Kosmos* (München: Beck, 1959); idem, *Die Entstehung des Menschen* (Münschen: Beck, 1961); idem, *Die lebendige Macht der Evolution* (Olten: Walter Verlag, 1967); idem, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1960); idem, *Christianity and Evolution: Reflections on Science and Religion*, trans. René Hague (London: Harvest Book, 2002).

[26] O' Collins, *Christology*, 217-218. See also C. F. Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ* (London: Collins, 1966).

process philosophy, transcendental philosophy etc. However, twentieth-century Christologies have benefitted positively from these philosophies.

The lasting legacy of Hegelian ideas is seen in the christological thought of scholars like Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-88), Eberhard Jüngel (b. 1934), Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926), and Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014). "Pannenberg, for instance, has taken over from Hegel such themes as the horizon of universal history and truth being found in the whole (the totality of history). For Moltmann's political-eschatological approach, in the passion and death of Jesus the whole story of human suffering becomes the sufferings of the triune God."[27]

The christological ambience, one must say, has also been impinged upon by the emergence of disciplines other than philosophy, whereby Greek philosophy gradually lost its monopoly over Western thought. O'Collins maintains, "It is certainly exaggerated to claim proudly or admit sadly that historical thinking has replaced metaphysical thinking or that truth is no longer seen as ontological but only as historical. But the rise of historical consciousness and the development of critical research into history have obviously profoundly influenced theology and… contemporary Christology."[28]

Lastly, Gerald O'Collins beautifully tabulates a few more modern influences which certainly have a bearing in the shaping of Christology even today. One such force at work was a renewed contact with Eastern Christianity, which has encouraged 'doing' Christology in an ecclesial and sacramental manner, especially in the Eucharistic context. The active feminist movement has time and again raised questions and provoked various insights concerning its role in doing theology. Tens of millions were killed in the twentieth century, fighting under the banner of religion, seeking to acquire power and wealth, position and honour. The best of human inventions have been used to do the worst to humanity, even to the point of using nuclear weapons, and committing outright

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[27] O' Collins, *Christology*, 219. See W. Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) and also J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974). See also Walter Kasper, „Revolution im Gottesverständnis? Zur Situation des ökumenischen Dialogs nach Jürgen Moltmanns ‚Der gekreuzigte Gott'," in *Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch ‚Der gekreuzigte Gott,'* ed. Michael Welker (München: Kaiser, 1979), 140-148. Kasper appreciates Moltmann's efforts to explain and clarify the basic thrust of his theology – the suffering and cross of Jesus, which Moltmann places at the centre of Christian life.

[28] O' Collins, *Christology*, 220.

genocide. Auschwitz and Hiroshima, where millions lost their lives, have set Jesus' own violent death in a ghastly new context of interpretation. Nevertheless, no later atrocities pose a bigger question for believers than the *Shoah*.[29] O'Collins questions: What do such systematic attempts to eradicate humanity "mean for contemporary faith in Jesus Christ and the theology that flows from it?"[30]

The various intellectual developments discussed in this section have clearly served as pointers necessitating a definitive Church teaching. The Church was engaged in deliberating on the person of Jesus Christ, redefining him as the final envoy of God. In the wake of such deliberation, the Church witnessed the dawn of Second Vatican Council, which brought, in the nick of time, the best theologians and thinkers of the Church to a common platform for further serious discussions.

1.1.1 The Christology of Second Vatican Council

The last century, also known as the century of ecumenical awakening, will go down in history for its ecumenical endeavours. Kasper firmly believes that "with the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church officially declared its irreversible commitment to ecumenism."[31] The Second Vatican Council, popularly called 'The Council of the Church,' was given a seemingly pastoral purpose and orientation. Kasper, twenty years after the end of the Council, making an overall study of the different documents formulated during the sessions, admitted that there has been a great deal of enthusiasm in the Church. The Church has been experienced as a *communio* and a deeper consciousness and conviction that we all are 'the Church,' has grown.[32] Kasper maintains that "the council did not renounce anything in previous dogmatic tradition," instead, it "renewed the doctrine of the Church as it has been passed down." However, it did place new doctrinal emphasis on "some important binding statements: the sacramentality and

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[29] In Judaism, *Shoah* (האוש) has the meaning of "calamity" in Hebrew, and this term became the standard usage for the twentieth century Holocaust, a term commonly applied since the mid-1970s after the systematic massacre of six million Jews by Nazis during the II World War.

[30] Cf. O' Collins, *Christology*, 223.

[31] Walter Kasper, "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: A Roman Catholic Perspective," in *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. William G. Rusch (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 14.

[32] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Kirche als Communio," in *Die bleibende Bedeutung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, ed. Franz Kardinal König (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1986), 64.

collegiality of the episcopal office, the universality of salvation, and others."[33] Even though the attention of the Council Fathers was centred more on Ecclesiology, the Church being the central theme, it obviously encouraged many to conclude that nothing remarkable affected the progress in Christology.

One should acquiesce in the actuality that the Council triggered off a reflection process which did result in a radical rethinking of the approach to Christology. In other words, the Catholic Church began to rediscover its past and its history. Catholic theologians began to rediscover that Jesus was a historical figure and lived in a particular Jewish historical and cultural context. They further reaffirmed that Christianity is not a tenacious and unchangeable supernatural institute, but rather an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, leading necessarily to one's faith-experience. Hence, Catholic scholars were commissioned with the task of liberating Christology from the so-called dogmatic straightjacket in which it had been incarcerated for almost fifteen centuries. It is fitting to quote Sebastian Kappen, who rightly says, "Jesus of Nazareth is the most forgotten person among the very people who claim to be his disciples… He lies buried under the weight of accumulated layers of rituals, concepts, legends, superstitious, institutions and laws."[34]

It was foreseen indeed that such *modus operandi* of re-appropriating the figure of Jesus in our contemporary context, addressing the concerns and challenges of present historical situations, would place Jesus not only in the centre of Christian life, but also as an anchor in the centre of humanity. Pope Paul VI, in his public audience on November 23, 1966 appropriately expressed the following: "If then we wish to understand the central doctrine of the Council, we must understand the Church; but to understand the Church, we must refer everything to Christ."[35]

These words of the then Pope indicated the place and importance that the mystery of Christ occupied. The Christ-centredness of this mega event, a milestone in the history of

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[33] Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 169-170. Kasper points out one of the difficulties of the text of Second Vatican Council as he sees conservative and progressive statements running parallel. It appears as if they have been juxtaposed having double viewpoint or even a dialectic approach (may not be called contradiction in the strict sense). Hence, both conservatives and progressives can find support in individual conciliar statements.

[34] Sebastian Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977), 22-23.

[35] Joseph Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, seventh revised and enlarged edition (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2008), 265.

the Catholic Church, seems to have grown as the Council progressed and reached its climax with its finest expression, especially in *Gaudium et Spes* 22 and 45. The Council explains that the human race finds in Christ its centre, the whole cosmos its Head, and history its goal (GS 45; cf. LG 13, 17, 48, etc.). The Council also believes that the key, centre and purpose of human history are to be found in her Lord and Master. "The church also maintains that beneath all that changes there is much that is unchanging, much that has its ultimate foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, and forever" [36] (GS 10).

Beyond the mysterious union of the two natures (ontological reality), which is also of prime importance, the Council prefers to dwell on the economy of the saving incarnation (LG 3; AG 3) and on the mysterious human conditions of the divine Word incarnate. It also examines Christ's *Kenosis*, the depth of his identification with human race, and also his glorification. It states: "The Word Incarnate wished to enter fully into human fellowship" (GS 32; also cf. no. 22). Besides, the Council teaches expressly and insistently the threefold-function present in Christ: prophetic, sanctifying, and pastoral (LG 21; OT 4). Christ is the mediator of God's revelation to the world; his person and his work contain the fullness of that revelation (DV 2, 4; SC 33); his saving action culminates in the Paschal Mystery (SC 5); and through the Church's liturgy the risen Christ remains present and active, exercising his priestly office for the whole human race (SC 83).

Peter De Mey, Professor of Roman-Catholic ecclesiology and ecumenism, Leuven, oberves:

> The First Vatican Council, in its efforts to make a stand against rationalism, certainly emphasized the possibility of a natural knowledge of God. For their knowledge of the supernatural divine truths however, the faithful were said to depend on revelation, "contained in written books and unwritten traditions". Revelation, thus, was understood as mediation of truth, and not a real encounter between God and humanity.[37]

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[36] Mary Elsbernd, "The Reinterpretation of *Gaudium et Spes* in *Veritatis Splendour*," in *Vatican II and its Legacy*, ed. M. Lamberigts and L. Kenis (Leuven: University Press, 2002), 194.

[37] Peter De Mey, "The Relationship between Revelation and Experience in *Dei Verbum*," in *Vatican II and its Legacy*, ed. Lamberigts and Kenis, 95.

Max Seckler, a German dogmatic theologian, called such an understanding of revelation as „*das instruktionstheoretische oder doktrinalistisch-konzeptualistische Offenbarungsmodell*“[38] and Avery Dulles, American Jesuit, termed it a “doctrinal, or propositional, model of revelation.”[39] On the contrary, the christological concentration, especially of *Dei verbum*, highlighted one of the most significant elements: through word and deed God does not reveal something, but reveals himself. The Council spoke of a “*seipsum revelare et notum facere sacramentum voluntatis suae* (to reveal himself and proclaim the mystery of his will).[40]

Thus, the mystery of Christ for this Council is, at every level, the foundation of the mystery of the Church, whose task it is “faithfully to reveal in the world his mystery” (LG 8; cf. 15; GS 43), and so “to bring together all mankind with all its treasures under Christ the Head, in the unity of the Holy Spirit” (LG 13). Christ, the new Adam, recapitulates all things in himself (GS 22, 45), on whom the solidarity of all people is based (GS 32), and who leads them all to their eschatological fulfilment (GS 38).[41] Modern problems that confront the leaders of the Church and different religions must attempt to find a solution in “the light and the principles that stem from Christ” (GS 46). Above all, the human mystery is fully intelligible only in the light of the mystery of Christ, who is the “image of the invisible God,” the new man, and the perfect man (GS 22).[42]

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[38] See Max Seckler, „Die Aufklärung – eine Herausforderung für das Christentum als Offenbarungsreligion,“ *ThQ* 159 (1979): 82-92; idem, „Aufklärung und Offenbarung,“ *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft* 21 (1980): 5-79; idem, „Die Verbum religiose audiens: Wandlungen im christlichen Offenbarungsverständnis,“ in *Offenbarung im jüdischen und christlichen Gottesverständnis*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowski and Walter Strolz (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1981), 214-236; idem, „Zur Interdependenz von Aufklärung und Offenbarung,“ *ThQ* 165 (1985): 161-173.

[39] Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, nineteenth edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013), 36; also see his *Was ist Offenbarung*? (Freiburg: Herder, 1970).

[40] Walter Kasper, “‘*Dei Verbum Audiens et Proclamans*’ – ‘Hearing the Word of God with Reverence and proclaiming it with Faith’. The Constitution on Divine Revelation ‘Dei Verbum’.” For further reading see page 6 of this paper. For the entire article see www.deiverbum2005.org/Paper/kasper_e.pdf (accessed March 15, 2012). This article is the provisional translation of the original German text. The beginning words of this Constitution – “*Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fideliter proclamans*” (hearing the Word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with confidence) also affirms that the reverently heard and faithfully proclaimed Word of God is a *praeconium salutis*, a message of salvation and word of life.

[41] Cf. Anton Houtepen, “Truth Enlightening All People. Christianity and Religious Pluralism after Vatican II,” in *Vatican II and its Legacy*, ed. Lamberigts and Kenis, 207-232. Houtepen elaborately explains the mind of Second Vatican Council and some of its core themes: dialogue of living faiths, unity in Christ, Christian tolerance and religious freedom as a basic human right, Church as Catholic and universal etc.

[42] The Council made it clear that only God can satisfy the deepest cravings of the human heart, for the world and what it has to offer can never fully content it. Man is anxious to know what is the meaning of his life, his activity and his death. And the most perfect answers to these questions are to be found in God alone, who not only created man in his own image and likeness, but also redeemed him from sin. Answer to all these questions are given by God in the revelation of Christ his Son who became man. Finally it asserts, whoever follows Christ the perfect man, becomes himself more a man (GS 41).

Kasper convincingly asserts that we neither discovered a new Gospel nor rejected the expressions of the revealed Gospel which our forefathers believed. Rather, it was re-discovered that this Gospel, once and for all revealed, is so deep and so rich that no one, no Council, and no theologian can ever exhaust it. He further affirms, "It is by the gift of the Holy Spirit that we were able to deepen our understanding so that we could recognise and re-receive our respective traditions."[43] Kasper argues that the authority of the Tradition can only be authority of truth. Here, the question at issue is, not whether the matter in discussion is conservative or progressive, but rather, whether it is corresponding to the real truth.[44]

While debating on the continuing challenge of the Second Vatican Council, Hermann Josef Pottmeyer views this Council in three different phases. Though for some thinkers and theologians this Council was a breath-taking spiritual event, others found it not particularly awakening and emphatic. Why? How was this Council viewed and received? Pottmeyer mentions that in the beginning it was a "phase of exuberance."[45] A spirit of liberation and a new beginning hovered over the Church and it was thus superseded, in some respect. But this spirit did not last long and it was soon replaced by a phase of disappointment - raising certain doubts with regard to the fulfilment of the expectations, thus swinging the pendulum between the progressives and the conservatives. This then brings in the third phase, a phase of reception and implementation.[46] Kasper is therefore of the opinion, and rightly so, that the Second Vatican Council is still on the agenda, since this Council is only at the beginning of its reception and implementation.

Although half a century has passed since this great historical Council began, the process of re-appropriating Jesus still continues. This interim period, without a shadow of doubt, has brought us to the awareness that Christianity or Christology is not mere the repetition of the 'good news' of Jesus. If it is to be meaningful, concrete, and tangible for present

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[43] Kasper, "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," 16.

[44] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Tradition als theologisches Erkenntnisprinzip," in *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie*, ed. Werner Löser, Karl Lehmann und Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Würzburg: Echter, 1985), 383. Cf. also Walter Kasper, „Tradierung und Vermittlung als systematisch-theologisches Problem," in *Tradierungskrise des Glaubens*, ed. Erich Feifel und Walter Kasper (München: Kösel, 1987). In these articles Kasper explains what tradition is and the concrete problems concerning its transmission.

[45] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 166.

[46] Cf. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 167.

times, it has to be concretely lived. The challenge is clear - stop repeating Christology and start doing Christology.

1.1.2 Theology and Christology Today: Its Further Growth

Christology, being a sub-discipline of theology, is a systematic study and deliberation on Jesus Christ, his Incarnation, life, mission, and especially the Paschal Mystery; it is a study of Jesus as the Christ. Gerald O' Collins, agreeing with a similar definition, continues to claim that Christology, "in seeking to clarify the essential truths about him (Jesus), it investigates his person and being (who and what he was/is) and his work (what he did/does)."[47] Michael Amaladoss, a leading Indian theologian, understands "Christology as a reflection on the person and ministry of Jesus Christ." He also cautions that "such a reflection can be conditioned by cultural world views. Such conditioned views can be prophetically challenged by broader and more correct world views."[48] But in recent times, Christology has itself become a vast discipline under which one finds many other sub-disciplines. These have evolved from different issues and contexts such as the New Testament Christology, History of Christology, Patristic Christology, Contemporary Christology, Liberation Christology, Existential Christology etc. This corroborates and authenticates the words of St. Paul written to the Church of Ephesus: "Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). The boundless riches of Christ, that St. Paul emphasises, are to be brought to fruition to answer the needs of the times since the whole world is longing for peace and harmony.

The foundation of Christianity is ascertained in its encounter with God, in and through the person of Jesus. Therefore Kasper, while analysing the entire God-question draws attention to the fact that after confessing God as the Father Almighty, the credo continues "and in Jesus Christ his only Son" (*et in Iesum Christum, Filium Eius unicum, Dominum nostrum*). He argues that "the question of God is therefore inseparable from the question

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[47] O' Collins, *Christology*, 1.

[48] Michael Amaladoss, "Asian Feminist Christology," in *Asian Faces of Christ: Theological Colloquium*, ed. Vimal Tirimanna (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), 176-182. This article of Amaladoss is his response to Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar who spoke on "Politicising the Body: A Feminist Christology."

of Christ."[49] This understanding and belief that Jesus is God-incarnate, raises several burning questions even today such as: how was God present to/in Jesus, and how was Jesus related to God? How are we to categorise him in relation to God and other human beings?[50] Modern christological questions have posed several difficult problems in the present era, especially in the context of religious pluralism. Providing convincing and rational answers by ignoring the traditions and the Councils of the Church is not the solution. There is a need of new language, new articulations, new expressions, and new vocabulary, but without neglecting the ancient classical formulas – *et nova et vetera* (both the new and the old). However problematic the former might appear to us, they continue and do shape the christological consciousness today. There is a need to revisit the traditional classical Councils and interpret their formulas for present generation, but without superseding the true validity of the dogmatic, especially christological formulations of the Councils. "Christologies that try to leap over the classical doctrines," says Roger Haight, "fail in comprehensiveness."[51] He further argues:

> Christology, then, is more fully conceived as the study of the generating source of Christian faith. It remains the central piece in the Christian vision; its reach extends the whole drama of salvation as this is conceived in Christian symbols… Christology, therefore… is part of a Christian theology that has as its scope an understanding of all things, of reality itself, in light, reductively, of an encounter with God as mediated by Jesus. [52]

What is the situation of Christology today? In recent times, many theologians have developed their own Christologies, and this plenitude of Christologies seems to address some particular major problems and certain issues in different socio-cultural contexts. As said earlier, "the discipline itself is divided into a number of subdisciplines… have generated their own bodies of literature. More and more, what is subsumed within the area of christology appears to be a confusing mass of accumulated data."[53] It would be reasonable, at this juncture, to enumerate, if not all, at least some of the major significant

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[49] Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O' Connell (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984), 158.

[50] New Testament Christologies try to respond to these questions in a variety of ways, attempting to understand the relationship between God and Jesus Christ. These issues were also deliberated in the fourth and fifth century Councils.

[51] Roger Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 16.

[52] Haight, *Jesus*, 16.

[53] Haight, *Jesus*, 17.

developments in Christology today, in order to demonstrate pluralism which now is present even within Christology. Here are a few important types and trends in Christology.

Transcendental Christology: This school of thought, Haight maintains, arose as a "response to extrinsicism in Christian thought, the idea that God's address to human existence in Jesus Christ comes entirely from 'outside' and runs counter to human interests and the inner exigencies of human freedom." Further, Transcendental Christology, wanting to show that Jesus Christ is precisely the fulfilment of the humanity, "begins with the transcendental phenomenology of human existence and finds a universal inner dynamism that reaches out for absolute truth, goodness, freedom, and being. In Jesus the divine has condescended to meet this need."[54] Therefore, God, through his incarnation in Jesus as the Christ, is the integral realisation of humanity. "Hypostatic union, describing the union of the Eternal Word and the human in Jesus, is the ideal case of what happens or can happen in all human beings who accept God's presence in grace."[55] Rahner introduced transcendental Christology, interpreting the event and the person of Jesus Christ in relation to the essential structure of the human person. His transcendental Christology tries to show how a specific event in history, namely, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ can have a meta-historical significance.[56]

Jesus Research: This approach is a sub-discipline of the study of the New Testament, and hence, to participate in it, one needs to be both a biblical scholar and a historian. "But even the non-specialist will notice that, despite the attempt to objectify the quest by establishing norms and criteria, a great deal of divergence about some quite fundamental matters concerning Jesus still reigns."[57] One should also not forget that Judaism, during

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[54] Haight, *Jesus*, 17.

[55] Haight, *Jesus*, 17. Karl Rahner's Christology could be an example for transcendental Christology.

[56] Cf. Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 206-212. Cf. Mark F. Fischer, "Rahner's 'New Christology' *Foundation of Christian Faith*," *Philosophy and Theology: Marquette University Journal* 22, nos. 1-2 (2010): 389-404; Rahner also published an introduction to his transcendental Christology in a volume co-authored by Wilhelm Thüsing. Cf. Karl Rahner, „Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie," in *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch. Arbeitsgrundlagen für eine interdisciplinäre Vorlesung*, ed. Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing (Freiburg: Herder, 1972). Rahner has tried to show how the incarnation of Jesus Christ can have a supra-historical significance.

[57] Haight, *Jesus*, 18. For further reading also see Robert B. Stewart, *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus: The Impact of Hermeneutics on the Jesus Research of John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright* (New York: University Press of America, 2008).

the time of Jesus, does allow and make room for different interpretations.[58] Haight further maintains, "There may be consensus on certain data about Jesus that are considered in some measure historically authentic. But one finds no consensus about how this data may be construed in a holistic way."[59] Though history has placed on record many events from the life of Jesus and his activities, it should be admitted that quite a large amount of information still remains unknown or unclear. Hence, modern generation is penetrating deeper into the life of Jesus, questioning what and how of this prominent historical figure with the hope that such Jesus Research might contribute to some clarity concerning the personality of Jesus and especially his universal mission.

Narrative Christology: When one concentrates on the historical Jesus, one is naturally often led towards a narrative approach of Christology, which seeks to explore the possibilities of what could be known about Jesus. Narrative Christologies take different forms which serve different intents.[60] They can be creedal or even non-creedal for that matter, but they have to bridge the gaps between the theology of the Church of the privileged and the theologies of the oppressed: *Vox victimarum, vox Dei* (the cries of the victims are the voice of God).[61] It should be admitted that some narrative Christologies, in recounting the story of Jesus, have been successful in a way that is technically exact and engaging in Christian life.[62] The salvation, Haight opined, that "Jesus Christ mediates to the world must never be misunderstood apart from its historical unfolding in concrete instances. Faith is the praxis of hope, and theology's role is to keep alive the narrative of salvation. Only a narrative account can appeal to praxis in response to historical suffering."[63]

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[58] Daniel J. Harrington, "The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing some Problems," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 49 (1987): 1-13. Read also John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering what happened in the Years immediately after the execution of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1998).

[59] Haight, *Jesus*, 18. Cf. also Marcus Borg, *Jesus-A New Vision* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987) and his *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

[60] Haight maintains that although narrative Christology probes Jesus' commitment to the reign of God, insofar perceived in his actions, however, according to Haight, a complete biography of Jesus is almost difficult but one could interpret some general patterns of Jesus' public ministry. See Haight, *Jesus*, 18.

[61] For more on this, visit: http://blog.mtshafer.com/2009/04/30/creed-and-ethics-toward-a-narrative-christology (accessed April 21, 2011).

[62] See the Christology of Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (New York: Image, Doubleday, 1984). This book was originally published in German under the title *Christ Sein* (München: R. Piper and Co., 1974). See also the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979). See also Christopher Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

[63] Haight, *Jesus*, 19. See also John Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 163-166; James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions:*

Existential Christology: While the roots of existential Christology run deep into the philosophical thought of men like Kierkegaard and Heidegger, the modern movement owes much to the impetus of Martin Kähler, who emphasised the distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.[64] For Kähler, the search for the historical Jesus is irrelevant for it can only lead to an ebionic[65] picture of Jesus. He differentiates between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, and it is the ‚*geschichtliche Christus*' who in his supra-historical significance meets man wherever the gospel is preached.[66] Haight explains existential Christology as follows:

> If narrative Christology depends on what we can know of Jesus, little though it may be, existential Christology is conscious of what we do not and cannot know because of historical sources and what, for theological reasons, should not engage us… Existential Christology sees the point of all christology as the encounter with God through faith that constitutes salvation… In terms of method… it will exploit the text, the genres, the stories as stories, the parables, and the sayings with literary or rhetorical criticism, in order once more to let the kerygma of Jesus mediate its power in Christian life. It is not Jesus precisely as a historical figure that is important, although Jesus as a person is presupposed. The significance of Jesus lies in how he impacts people, and thus how he is interpreted.[67]

Liberation Christology: Liberation Christology differs from Existential Christology in that it focuses "on Jesus and assumes a narrative style in presenting him, but analogous to it in its concern for salvation and its use of hermeneutics in approaching Jesus… What makes Liberation Christology distinctive, then, is its hermeneutical principle or key, which in some respects has become symbolically evident in the phrase 'option for the poor.' Jesus is interpreted from the point of view of the social and cultural situation of

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Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of John Baptist Metz (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 129-134.

[64]In 1892, his *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* appeared. See Martin Kähler, *So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic-Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

[65] Ebionism is the incorrect theological view that Jesus was not divine but merely an ordinary man. Furthermore, it says that Jesus was adopted by God the Father in order to be called the Son of God. Ebionites, or *Ebionaioi* (Greek: Ἐβιωναῖοι; derived from Hebrew אביונים *ebyonim*, *ebionim*, meaning "the poor" or "poor ones"), is a term referring to a Jewish Christian movement, who although regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, rejected his divinity.

[66] For more on Existential Christology, visit the article *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* by Claude Webster. http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/webster/ccac01a.htm#40 (accessed April 21, 2011).

[67] See Haight, *Jesus*, 19. Also see Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). For more on Existential Christology see M. Ogden *Christ Without Myth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961) and also his *The Point of Christology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982).

destitution that allows people to barely survive in subhuman conditions."[68] According to Haight,

> Existential and liberation christologies are not necessarily as antithetical as they are often depicted: the one privatized, the other socially conscious; the one denying the relevance of the historical reality of Jesus, the other in danger of using the discipline of history uncritically… Liberation christology is seen as explicitly hermeneutical and concerned with salvation; it never seeks the "historical facts" of Jesus' life for its own sake.[69]

Feminist Christology: Haight states that many regard Feminist Christology as closely associated even today with Liberation Christology, "insofar as they share a common dialectical framework, the formal structure of oppression and liberation."[70] It is a noted fact that a good number of the world's poor are mostly women and, therefore, it is possible that the feminist theologians see themselves as liberation theologians.[71] Haight argues:

> But, at the same time, the distinctive problematic of patriarchal structures, inasmuch as they have shaped the Christian tradition itself, provide this theology with a particular focus with universal import. In the measure that androcentrism has controlled the meaning of Jesus Christ, feminist christology has been forced to question how a male saviour figure can offer salvation for women. In broader terms, however, feminist christology deals with every form of oppression and their interconnections. The God, mediated by Jesus Christ calls into question all dominating power.[72]

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[68] Haight, *Jesus*, 20. The best example of Latin American Liberation Christology is Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993). Cf. also Dorothee Soelle, *Political Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) and Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator. A Critical Christology for Our Time*, trans. Patrick Huges (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978).

[69] Haight, *Jesus*, 20.

[70] Haight, *Jesus*, 20.

[71] Cf. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

[72] Roger Haight, *Jesus*, 21. Also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 3-13. Also read Julie Hopkins, *Towards a Feminist Christology. Jesus of Nazareth, European Women and the Christological Crisis* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995); Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 2012); idem, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 2002).

Inculturated Christology: Inculturated Christology, as Haight sees it, "responds to the concrete negativities of a given historical context, and thus it takes on the character of the culture to which it responds. But the problem of inculturation is more general than that of liberation, and it can become more radical. For inculturation makes the issues that are involved in interpretation explicit and it underscores the necessity of change and difference in understanding."[73] He further opines:

> Jesus Christ must become African, Indian, Sri Lankan, Filipino, and Bolivian, in the same measure in which he became Greek and Latin, and profoundly reinterpreted by successive waves of western culture. Pluralism, sameness with differences, the possibility of mutual recognition within cross-cultural communication, Christian identity focused on and through Jesus amid different understandings of salvation, these are the themes that have risen to the surface and will assume great importance in the years to come.[74]

Process Christology: Process Christology has been often understood as a summing-up of Liberation theology, seeking to remain faithful to the traditional creedal definitions. Haight explains Process Christology as:

> Process thought is an attempt to accommodate the experience of historicity and change that has called the paradigm of classical consciousness into question. With a coherent philosophical base, and in terms more dynamic than those of substance philosophy, it reformulates issues that demand categories of fluidity and action… the Incarnation is understood dynamically within a framework of God's ongoing communicating presence to the world. The duality of humanity and divinity within the unity of Jesus finds a distinctively constructive interpretation in which God's self-presence and human freedom reciprocally interact. Fundamentally, standard christological issues are reinterpreted by the categories of process.[75]

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[73] Haight, *Jesus*, 21.

[74] Haight, *Jesus*, 21. For more on Inculturated Christology, also see Robert Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991) and Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993). See also Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Hendrick M. Vroom, ed., *One Gospel – Many Cultures. Case Studies and Reflections on Cross-Cultural Theology* (New York: Amsterdam, 2003).

[75] Roger Haight, *Jesus*, 22. See Norman Pittenger, *Catholic Faith in a Process Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 73-101 and also *The Word Incarnate* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959). Also see John Cobb, *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975). Also read David Ray Griffin, *A Process Christology* (University of Michigan: Westminster Press, 1973).

Jesus Christ and other Religions: Jesus Christ and his importance in relation to other religions is another significant and challenging area of study today. This particular field of study, especially in India, and in those areas dominated by other religions of the world, is "central to the project of inculturation, to Christian identity, and thus to Christology… is not a corollary to ecclesiology, missiology, or christology; it defines the point of departure."[76] Haight argues that it was Ernst Troeltsch, who at the turn of the twentieth century raised the question of the absoluteness of Christianity, which is a serious and disputable christological question even today. He further argues:

> The measure in which this issue is recognised today, not only by theologians but also by educated Christians generally, and the amount of discussion it is receiving in courses of theology and comparative religion, indicate the degree in which general consciousness has become historical consciousness… the fact that one finds little, if any, consensus on the status of Jesus relative to other mediations of God in history shows that this is a genuinely open question, one which defines an attitudinal matrix that is prior to other Christological issues.[77]

Pope St. John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter for the preparation of the Jubilee of the Year 2000 stated that "The two thousand years which have passed since the birth of Christ… represent an extraordinarily great Jubilee, not only for Christians but indirectly for the whole of humanity, given the prominent role played by Christianity during these two millennium" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 15). He hoped that, though members of other faiths might not fully share in Christian belief and faith in Jesus Christ, they would walk at least part of the way with Christians.

Having completed these preliminary discussions on the growth of Christology, christological insights of Second Vatican Council, and the emergence of different types of Christologies as a response to the various human situations and socio-cultural settings, it is now appropriate to introduce Kasper and the theological thinking of his time. In the

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[76] Haight, *Jesus*, 21.

[77] Haight, *Jesus*, 21-22. Paul Knitter is one among the many thinkers who has taken up the issue of Jesus Christ and other religions, placing challenging question before his readers. For further insights in this area see some of his important works, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), and see also Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes, ed., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007).

following pages, the christological contributions of Kasper will be enumerated briefly, in light of the selected contemporary scholars of his time, thus setting the stage for further deliberations on other important christological issues.

1.2 Walter Kasper and His Contemporaries

In this section, in addition to addressing the contribution of Kasper, a brief survey is made of the christological contributions of Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng. Why are these two theologians chosen? Edward Schillebeeckx's *Jesus*[78] and *Christ*[79] were notable European explorations into the mystery of Christ and the problem of Christology. Hans Küng's *On Being a Christian*[80] along with his colleague from Tübingen, Walter Kasper's *Jesus the Christ* offered markedly contrasting approaches (considered solely from the christological standpoint). Both these contemporaries of Kasper provided important stimuli, thus presenting a serious and in-depth Christology, especially in the Roman Catholic Tradition.

1.2.1 Edward Schillebeeckx

Schillebeeckx considers his work to be the outcome of deep study and reflection, focusing primarily on Johannine and Pauline Christologies. In his *Jesus*, one of the major theological works of the 1970s also called 'Jesus book,' he deals with some of the successive New Testament Christologies, adding to these his own reflections. In spite of the length and complexity of this book, Schillebeeckx insists that it is only a prolegomenon[81] because the guiding concern of the author is with the problem of emancipation or human self-liberation today; in other words, with the problem that has given rise to the theologies of liberation.[82] His best-selling tome is comprehensive in scope, with christological and Trinitarian reflections. Schillebeeckx presents his Christology portraying the person of Jesus as the story of a man who also became the

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[78] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979).

[79] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980).

[80] Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976).

[81] Cf. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 33, 669.

[82] Charles Davis, "The Jesus Book of Edward Schillebeeckx," *JSTOR: The Journal of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1980): 330.

story of God. He attempts a Narrative Christology having a pastoral purpose, and he does not want Christology to be summarised as a set of doctrines and codewords. On the contrary, he wants his Christology to have an existential intent, a living force, that is alive and active in people's practical lives; a practical Christology that would be faithful to the original biblical witness of the first Christian communities, and also responsive to the signs of the times.[83] Jesuit theologian Brian McDermott, commenting on Schillebeeckx's christological thought states:

> The starting point of his Christological exploration is the movement begun by Jesus, which is the medium through which we encounter him. From the very beginning, Christianity involved an experience of the Spirit in remembrance of Jesus: *pneuma* and *anamnesis*. It is at once evident that a modern Christological interpretation of Jesus cannot start from the kerygma (or dogma) about Jesus, or indeed from a so-called purely historical Jesus of Nazareth.[84]

Hence, according to Schillebeeckx, a historical and critical approach, set within the dynamic of faith, remains the only proper starting point.[85] His important observation is that the constant factor in Christology is the Christian movement itself, community experience which refers to Jesus, though expressed in numerous and several ways. Furthermore, the Easter-event by itself, according to him, is not able to function as the starting point for Christology, because the Easter kerygma is substantially supported by recollections and narrations of Jesus' life and death. The normative criterion for the Church's proclamation is Jesus himself, accessible not *per se* but by way of experiences of his disciples before and after his death, or "only apprehended in the process whereby Christian Churches allow themselves to be defined by Jesus."[86] Schillebeeckx opts for the non-dogmatic theology which teaches that in Christ there are two natures, human and divine, but only one divine person, and that, though Jesus took a fully human nature, he did not take a human person. Jesus' humanity was impersonal (*anhypostasis*). However, Schillebeeckx prefers to affirm that Jesus was a divine person in one sense and a human

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[83] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Edward Schillebeeckx OP: Encountering God in a Secular and Suffering World," *Theology Today* 62 (2005): 383.

[84] Brian O. McDermott, "Current Theology. Roman Catholic Christology: Two Recurring Themes," *TS* 41 (1980): 347-348.

[85] Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 55.

[86] Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 78.

person in a later, modern sense of a person as a centre of consciousness. This human person exists within the divine person of the Son of God (*enhypostasis*).[87]

Thomas Clarke, a Jesuit theologian argues that the question of Jesus' trustworthiness and the existing Father-Son relationship is central to Schillebeeckx, as "he places a major emphasis on the original *Abba*-experience of Jesus, as source and secret of his being, message and manner of life."[88] This *Abba*-experience of Jesus is an expression of a 'prior' self-communication of God to Jesus. But the greatest challenge to this trustworthiness of Jesus was not his death, as many theologians would maintain. On the contrary, Schillebeeckx considers that those instances in which Jesus met with rejection and resistance to his message during his ministry played a vital role. It is quite evident that he is developing a Christology from below, gathering together "elements which may lead to a new, authentic disclosure-experience or source-experience."[89]

Finally, "the ultimate ground in Jesus of his union with the Father and his revelatory power for us is his divine Sonship. Jesus is essentially "Son of God," but in a way which allows us to call Jesus a human person."[90] He discusses in a meaningful sense, the relation between redemption and salvation as offered to us in Jesus Christ. To be a Christian, Schillebeeckx admits, is to accept that "final salvation-from-God is disclosed in the person of Jesus."[91] But what can this salvation from God mean for the present world and present human condition? Though he attempts to interpret the New Testament faith and the understanding of salvation, his book calls for further substantial reflection in the present context and understanding. In this sense, his book could be rightly called a prolegomenon.

In his other well-known book *Christ*, Schillebeeckx tries to deal with questions like: what does it mean to confess that Jesus is the saviour, and what is the meaning and relevance of Christian faith in the world today? He argues that faith in Jesus Christ and Christian spirituality must be integrated within daily human experiences. If isolated, the faith

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[87] http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/823424viviano.html (accessed June 11, 2014). This web page does not exist at present.

[88] Thomas E. Clarke, "Current Christologies," *Worship* 53, no. 5 (1979): 440-441.

[89] Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 571.

[90] McDermott, "Current Theology," 350.

[91] Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 30.

element and the Christian spirituality will not be productive, rather will remain unreal and unsubstantial.

Schillebeeckx, while dealing with sin, redemption and salvation, lists seven 'coordinates' which relate human nature to divine salvation. He specifies seven factors which must enter into salvation, or the experience of salvation. Salvation, according to him, must embrace concrete human person, nature, and the ecological environment; the social nature of men and women; humanity's need for institutional (political) structures; human conditioning by time and space, which calls for international solidarity and universal concern; humanity's utopian religious consciousness; and the happy combination, or "irreducible synthesis," of all these factors.[92] These 'coordinates' should be regarded only as useful tools to guide one's thinking and not be seen as an absolute limit to God's saving power. He identifies the main challenge which Christianity faces: the hazard of handing on the experience of salvation by God, in and through Jesus Christ, in a secularised culture and a world of global suffering and violence. He is convinced that "the central Christian claim that Jesus is the universal saviour has to be understood in a radically new way, if it is to remain credible and effective in the contemporary world."[93]

Although Schillebeeckx often speaks of the Kingdom of God, unlike Kasper, he does not make this subject his central theme or focal point. For him, the phrase 'Kingdom of God' refers to God's actual nature and Jesus' message of the Kingdom is a proclamation of the 'humanity of God.'[94] He maintains that the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached is the saving presence of God made manifest in human beings' abolition of the sharp contrast between the powerful and the powerless.[95] Schillebeeckx maintains that Jesus' death was a consequence of his way of life: a life committed to the cause of justice and love, the consequence of an option for the outcast and destitute, and a choice for people suffering under exploitation.[96] He further interprets the resurrection of Jesus in a unique way. He does not lay much emphasis on the visibility/appearances of the risen Lord, which many scholars employ to ground their foundation of Christian belief and existence. "An Easter

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[92] Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 731-743.

[93] Mathew Illathuparampil, chief editor, *The Contemporary Theologians: Context and Contributions* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006), 445.

[94] Edward Schillebeeckx, *For the Sake of the Gospel* (London: SCM, 1989), 48.

[95] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (London: SCM, 1990), 111-112.

[96] Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 125.

appearance," for Schillebeeckx, "is not the object of a neutral observation, but a faith-motivated experience in response to an eschatological disclosure."[97]

Though Schillebeeckx writes in a post-Enlightenment context, a certain continuity of Thomistic tradition is evident in his writings. His book *Jesus* gives a comprehensive understanding of various christological themes as they reflect the Old and New Testament backgrounds. Since his style is narrative and has a pastoral and practical intent, this book proves to be very provocative. Schillebeeckx, with his broad thinking and free-flowing literary presentation, offered something new for his time. Among Catholic theologians, he is considered to be one of the most famous theologians to conduct a historical research on Jesus, and offer it in an intelligible way. In spite of three investigations conducted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)[98] on certain theological views and interpretations by Schillebeeckx, especially on the empty tomb and resurrection experiences, and the sacramental nature of the office in the Roman Catholic Church, his works have not been condemned by the Church authorities. Through his significant contributions, using a wide range of philosophical and hermeneutical systems, Schillebeeckx has shown how theologians could make use of biblical exegesis. His theological ventures and accomplishments encourage his readers to take their own faith-experience seriously.

1.2.2 Hans Küng

Hans Küng, considered to be one of the most prominent and outspoken theologians of his time, has attracted enormous attention from different corners. He has also provoked some opposition, especially from Church authorities. He has been credited with having a very strong influence and impact on some of his contemporary theologians like Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann and even Eberhard Jüngel. Though questioned by the magisterium for some of his disputed views and for the polemic nature of his ideas, he

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[97] Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 448.

[98] This Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, originally also called as 'Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition,' was founded in 1542, originally called as 'Sacred Congregation of Universal Inquisition.' It forbids any teachings or practices in the Roman Catholic Church that are not in line with the magisterial teachings. Its main task is to defend the Church from any types of heresies, strictly examine and proscribe errors and false doctrines and thereby, maintain Catholic teaching and integrity of faith.

still remains one of the most widely studied theologians because he covered a very broad spectrum of theological themes.

Küng's dedication to Christology did not begin with his classical opus *On Being a Christian*, as generally assumed, but was already laid out in his lesser known work *The Incarnation of God*.[99] Here, Küng already pursued the most critical and crucial theological questions, namely, how God could be encountered in history and how God is related to the process of history, thus exploring the foundation of a future Christology. He also called for a Christology 'from below' which is "interested in the Jesus who meets us today, with the horizon of the world, humankind and God, as the challenge to faith which he personally embodies."[100]

Küng, whose theological method is anthropological, in his book *On Being a Christian*, strongly affirms the uniqueness of Christianity, in the context of the reality of the historical Jesus. Exploring major themes in the life and mission of Jesus, Küng discusses in a very liberal way some vital issues in Christian theology. In his christological venture, Küng takes into consideration the contemporary challenges presented by both modern humanism and world religions. For him, Christ is the norm of Christian theology and the centre of Scripture. In the central section of this classical work, Küng elaborately discusses Jesus' life and death in the context of religions and culture of Christ's time, Jesus' proclamation of God's cause, Jesus' own identification with the human cause, the conflict which led to his death, and the reactions to his life and death by emerging Christian communities.[101]

It is clear that "Küng develops his Christology over against the classical concept of God mediated by Greek metaphysics… He wishes to establish what it means to respond to Jesus Christ today… Therefore, he places Christology in the context of the contemporary challenges presented by modern humanism and world religions."[102] As mentioned earlier,

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[99] The original work is titled – *Menschwerdung Gottes: Eine Einführung in Hegels theologisches Denken als Prolegomena zu einer künftigen Christologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1970). The English translation was published only in 1987 (Edinburgh: T and T Clark).

[100] Hans Küng, *The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to the Future Christology* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1987), 491.

[101] Werner G. Jeanrond, "Hans Küng" in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, second edition, ed. David Frank Ford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 166.

[102] Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 284.

he explicitly calls for a 'Christology from below.'[103] Christianity, Küng opines, is not to be equated only with whatever is good, true and beautiful in this world. Moreover, "Christianity exists only where the meaning of Jesus Christ is activated in theory and practise."[104] He also stresses that belief in God is not only a matter of human reason, but of the entire person, the concrete living man – with body, mind, reason, instinct, his historical and cultural setting, habits of thoughts, his value-system, his interests and his social environment.[105] He sees God as having a cosmic dimension, efficiently operative in the world process, in human history and especially in the individual believer. He is in, with, and among human beings and things, "He himself being the source, goal and centre of this world process."[106] It is this God that Jesus proclaimed in his life, death and resurrection.

For Küng, the starting point of christological reflection is the *logia* (λόγια) and deeds of Jesus. He maintains:

> For we should best proceed as if we started out like the first disciples from the real human being Jesus, his historical message and manifestation, his life and fate, his historical reality and historical activity, and then ask about the relationship of this human being Jesus to God, about his unity with the Father.[107]

Küng presents Jesus as an opponent of traditionalism and faddism, refusing to fit into any of the existing categories of his time. In other words, the historical Jesus of Küng is the Jesus of the "New Quest," someone other than the Christ of dogma or of literature. In his thinking, the historical-critical method seems to be the right approach to recover the authentic earthly Jesus with a certain amount of reliability because, for Küng, "the earthly Jesus is the sole final norm of Christology and Christian faith."[108] Küng believes that the historical-critical method can aid faith by opening up new prospects and insights and can

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[103] Hans Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry* (London: Collins, 1971), 491. Cf also, Walter Kasper, „Christologie von unten? Kritik und Neuansatz gegenwärtiger Christologie," in *Grundfragen der Christologie Heute*, ed. Leo Scheffczyk (Freiburg am Breisgau: Herder, 1975), 159-165. Here Kasper objectively analysis the book of Hans Küng, "Christ sein" without denouncing its content.

[104] Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 125.

[105] Jeanrond, "Hans Küng," 166-167.

[106] Hans Küng, *Does God Exist: An Answer for Today* (London: Collins, 1980), 649.

[107] Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 133.

[108] McDermott, "Current Theology," 351.

also inspire Christians in a variety of ways; however, he maintains that the historical-critical method alone cannot prove the content of faith.[109]

Special reference should be made to Küng's understanding of Jesus' resurrection: Jesus, through his resurrection, is assumed into the life of God and is now the content of faith. "As finally exalted to God, he is now in the definitive and comprehensive sense - 'once and for all' - God's *representative* to men."[110] The resurrection event justifies who Jesus was and what he did. It confirms the cross that reveals Jesus as justified and further, depicts God as one who acknowledges, approves, and authenticates Jesus' life and deeds. The only point of deviation is that, Küng explicitly disagrees with the view that the resurrection effected the revelation of additional truths. The one who is alive and active in the world is identical with the pre-resurrection Jesus. Jesus lives in a radically new mode of existence, but the substance of the risen Lord's reality is the earthly one, uniquely confirmed by God. In other words, Küng's theology of the resurrection points back to the life and death of Jesus from Nazareth. Such an emphasis on the role of the pre-Easter Jesus seems to establish a sharp departure from what traditional Catholic Christology generally highlights.

Küng interprets and explains the various eschatological symbols – heaven, hell, eternity and judgement in light of the resurrection of Jesus and the Christian belief based on this resurrection. "Jesus did not die into nothingness. In death and from death he died into that incomprehensible and comprehensive absolutely final and absolutely first reality; was accepted by that reality, which we designate by the name of God."[111] According to him, to believe in eternal life does not mean hoping to continue to live forever. It means, "to rely on the fact that I shall one day be fully understood, freed from guilt and definitely accepted and can be myself without fear… will one day become finally transparent, and the questions of the meaning of history one day be finally answered."[112]

Further, Küng takes the phrase 'Truly God and truly man' from the Chalcedonian formula. He believes that this expression is enough and capable of an up-to-date paraphrase, resulting in nothing being subtracted from the truths of the Councils, and

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[109] Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 165.

[110] Clarke, "Current Christologies," 445.

[111] Hans Küng, *Eternal Life? An Enquiry* (London: Collins, 1984), 145.

[112] Küng, *Eternal Life?* 287.

perfectly coinciding with the truth of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is truly God in the sense that the uniqueness, underivability, or unsurpassability of the call, offer, and claim made known in and with Jesus, is ultimately not of human but of divine origin, and therefore, absolutely reliable. Truly human, Jesus is wholly and entirely man, and as such model of what it is to be human.[113]

Finally, Küng calls for a global understanding of ecumenism. Ecumenism, according to his definition, should no longer be limited to an inner-Christian conversation. Rather, if *ecumene* is understood in its original sense as the whole inhabited earth,[114] it ought to include a conversation between great religions. Therefore, in his book *Christianity and the World Religions* (1984) Küng presents, in cooperation with the leading historians of religion, introductions to the three ancient religions in the world, namely, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, and each of these introductions is followed by Küng's response from the Christian perspective.

Küng's readers must be cognisant regarding some of his theological positions which are in varying degrees in conflict with the teachings of the Catholic Church.[115] As regards the magisterium, he argues for the freedom of theologians even against the explicit claims of the magisterium. His position challenging the dogma of the infallibility of the Church contradicts the doctrine defined by the First Vatican Council and confirmed by the Second Vatican Council. Together with other theologians, Küng also publicly protested against the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which warned against artificial birth control. Finally, he also maintained, that in case of necessity, the Eucharist can be validly consecrated by a non-ordained baptised person. The magisterium has strongly rejected this proposal of Küng.[116]

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[113] Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 444-450; Cf. also Clarke, "Current Christologies," 445.

[114] Hans Küng, *Christianity and World Religions: Path of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), xiv.

[115] The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, engaged in safeguarding and also promoting the teachings of the Church with issues concerning faith and morals released on February 15, 1975 a document, stating the errors in Küng's theological position.

[116] Rebeiro Manuel, *The Church as the Community of the Believers*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Intercultural Publication, 2001), 12.

1.2.3 Kasper's Christology: A Synthesis

Different styles in Christology developed, as analysed above, in response to different situations and circumstances. It is now opportune to present, briefly, the Spirit Christology of Walter Kasper and thereby attempt to ascertain where exactly he stands in the light of various contextual Christologies. The following is a condensed exposition, which will be treated elaborately in the later chapters of the present work. A new language and creative thought-pattern so as to make the implicit message of Christ explicit for today is, for Kasper, the predominant need.[117] Kasper's in-depth study indicates that in the process of theologising he has made use of various disciplines of philosophy, exegesis, historical studies and dogmatic theology.

At the very beginning, one should consider that until Kasper began his contributions to Ecumenism, he was relatively unknown in the English-speaking theological sphere. More recently, however, he has indeed earned a reputation and won the appreciation of many, especially in academic circles. His substantial contributions in the area of Ecumenism and especially to Christology through his classical theological work '*Jesus the Christ*,' his broad thinking and openness to contemporary issues while being faithful to the traditions of the Church and her teachings, clearly merit the recognition he has acheived. His services as the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity will remain ingrained in the history of Ecumenism.

Post-modernity has challenged theology with numerous questions, and yet it must be admitted that no modern ideologies have successfully succeeded in formulating a fitting response. Dissatisfied with contemporary approaches to Christology and, thereby, attempting to expound a Spirit Christology, Kasper ventures to reformulate Christology by using the historical-critical method in interpreting Jesus, showing at the same time absolute fidelity to the believing community and faith proclamations.[118] Hence, Christology for Kasper is a Christology of complementarity or reciprocity, a Christology

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[117] As mentioned earlier, Kasper is one of those theologians very faithful to the traditions and to the teachings of the Church. What is meant here is a creative interpretation of this tradition, on the one side maintaining the core message of Jesus unaltered, and on the other, finding out means and ways to make this message more meaningful and tangible to the believing community as well as the society.

[118] Kasper takes every step to defend the legitimacy of tradition and thereby stresses the necessity of remaining faithful to the proclamations of Nicaea and Chalcedon.

constructed on the "correlation of the historical Jesus and the proclaimed Christ"[119] and that the faith of the Church or the witness of the believing community is the inevitable centre that makes this Christology possible.[120] Although it is certain that recent studies in Christology have produced myriad forms of Jesus traditions, Kasper, who is faithful to the apostolic tradition, goes back to Nicaea and Chalcedon as his starting point, which in turn adheres to the principle of living traditions as their basis and according to which tradition and interpretation form one unity.[121]

Some interesting similarities as well as dissimilarities can be sketched out when these three, namely, Schillebeeckx, Küng and Kasper, are juxtaposed. Schillebeeckx attempts to look for what christological belief in Jesus of Nazareth can intelligibly signify for people today,[122] struggling at the same time with the perennial issue of uniqueness/universality tension in Christology. The human person of Jesus, the man Jesus, is the starting point and the criterion he employs. In this way, he is closer to Küng than Kasper, who prefers to begin with the faith of the believing community, the Church. However, some place Schillebeeckx between Küng and Kasper.

1.2.3.1 Significant Ingredients of Kasper's Spirit Christology

In his preface to the latest edition '*Jesus der Christus*,' Kasper explicitly states that the purpose of his work is not to draw up a new Christology…

> *„Jesus der Christus" wollte und konnte keine neue Christologie entwerfen. Es geht um den lebendigen, heute wirksam gegenwärtigen Christus. Er ist „derselbe gestern heute und in Ewigkeit"(Heb. 13:8).*[123]

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[119] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 19. He strongly feels that such methodology and Christology will help interpret each other, namely, historical Jesus and doctrinal claims of the risen and exalted Christ, a Christology that will address the human malaise.

[120] Walter Kasper, "Orientations in Current Christology," *Theology Digest* 31 (1984): 109. Hence for Kasper, the actuality and the variety of the Church's faith in Christ is the starting point of Christology.

[121] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 237; idem, *Methods of Dogmatic Theology*, trans. John Drury (Ireland: Ecclesia Press, 1969), 33-44; idem, „Einer aus der Trinität. Zur Neubegründung einer spirituellen Christologie in trinitätstheologischer Perspektive," in *Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinen Gott. Elemente einer trinitarischen Theologie*, ed. Michael Böhnke und Hanspeter Heinz (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985), 316-333. Cf. also Robert Victor Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London: SPCK, 1953), 210f. According to Kasper, a consistent understanding of Jesus is evident in the doctrinal proclamations of Nicaea and Chalcedon and they remain valid and binding even today.

[122] Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 33.

[123] Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, 21.

… but an attempt to convey the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ with the help of Pneumatology, and thus develop a Spirit Christology.

> *„Jesus der Christus" hat den Versuch unternommen, Einzigkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi mit Hilfe der Pneumatologie miteinander zu vermitteln und eine ausgesprochene Pneuma-Christologie zu entfalten.*[124]

This being his objective, Kasper starts with a historical reconstruction of Jesus' life, namely, the humanity of Jesus, the relationship between his words and deeds, the interpretation and significance of his miracles, including Jesus' claims, titles etc. In the second part of his book, Kasper analyses the events leading to Jesus' death and resurrection and finally presents Jesus as the mediator between God and the world. Throughout this section, the role of the Holy Spirit, who is especially predominant here, is theologically and systematically reflected. Jesus' fundamental option for the poor, his '*Abba*-consciousness,' his authoritative teaching etc., speak volumes about his unique human nature and God's self-manifestation through him. Here, Kasper argues for a dual character of Jesus: the absolute and definitive humanity of Jesus and also a definitive and unique revelation of God in Jesus. Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament, who quotes the Old Testament and makes it the Good News. Jesus, maintains Kasper, is the Word in the many words of the Scripture; he is the melody of the Scripture.[125] This is Kasper's approach and the defining character of his methodology.

Since Christology derives its existence totally from faith in Jesus Christ, the question of paramount importance is: Who is Jesus?[126] An insulated nature of the two basic fundamental Christologies, namely, Christology from above and below, Kasper holds, do not give a satisfactory answer to the key question – who is Jesus Christ? They somehow

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[124] Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, 26. See also Walter Kasper, „Aspekte gegenwärtiger Pneumatologie," in *Gegenwart des Geistes* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1980), 7-22. Kasper here attempts to radically develop the ideas of Yves Congar, whose original work on Holy Spirit in French, *Je crois en l'Esprit saint*, 3 Volumes (Paris, 1979 – 1980) later appeared in German: *Der Heilige Geist* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1982) and was also translated in English: *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 Volumes, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1983).

[125] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Prolegomena zur Erneuerung der geistlichen Schriftauslegung," in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus*, ed. Hubert Frankemölle and Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 522.

[126] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 163, 177; idem, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 177-178; idem, „Für eine Christologie in geschichtlicher Perspektive: Replik auf die Anmerkungen von Hans Küng," in *Grundfragen der Christologie Heute*, ed. L. Scheffczyk (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 182.

appear to unduly constrict, the former narrowing the humanity of Jesus and the latter the unique Sonship of Jesus.[127] He argues that Jesus' earthly life is the realisation and expression of his very being, and hence, the ontological approach and the functional approach to the person of Jesus Christ are in no way contradictory approaches, but complementary.

Thus, Christology from below finds its fundament and purpose in Christology from above.[128] Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI opines that in Jesus Christ and his person, human existence becomes oriented to the whole, and hence, Christian faith is nothing but this special personal encounter with the living God in Jesus Christ.[129] Therefore, any exclusivism here is not to be entertained because the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (Christology from above) is complemented by the life, mission, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Christology from below).[130] An authentic Christology must combine the being and the doing of Jesus Christ, his person and teaching, which are in actuality inter-dependent, and must not be treated in isolation.

1.2.3.2 The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith

Kasper maintains that a Christology that is entirely separate from the historical Jesus reduces belief in Christ to an ideology, and, he also rejects an exclusive concentration of the historical Jesus. The pertinent question then is: What then is Christology for Kasper? Kasper lays emphasis on the words and deeds of Jesus that reveal and make explicit his implicit identity as Son of God and his relationship with the Father. This Father-Son

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[127] Cf. Mohan Doss, *Christ in the Spirit: Contemporary Spirit Christologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005), 118. This is the reworked book of his original doctoral dissertation: *Pneuma-Christology: Contemporary Discussions Concerning Spirit Christology*, approved by the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg, Germany on 10.02.2000. Cf. also Walter Kasper, „Christologie von unten?" 141-170. In this article Kasper discusses various aspects of Christology – its point of departure based on the confession of the early Church that Jesus is the Christ, the contents of Christology and its central problem. See also Walter Kasper, „Neuansätze gegenwärtiger Christologie," in *Christologische Schwerpunkte*, ed. Walter Kasper (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1980), 17-36. Here Kasper presents the reasons for a Christology from below, its problems, its anthropological orientation and the renewal of biblical theology, thus bringing out the relationship between christological traditions and dogmas, and thereby drawing conclusion that tradition is a process of concrete and lively interpretation, of translation and of the realisation of the original biblical confession of faith, taking into consideration the modifications and changes in the historical situation.

[128] Kasper, „Neuansätze gegenwartiger Christologie," 14.

[129] Cf. Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI. The Christocentric Shift* (United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 129.

[130] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 37-38, 198-208. O' Collins also addresses this issue where Christologies from above and below cannot be considered as exclusives. See Gerald O' Collins, *What Are They Saying About Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 3f.

relationship can be affirmed only when the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are viewed as interdependent and not as exclusives. Hence, as mentioned earlier, Kasper seeks a Christology constructed from the correlation of the historical Jesus and the proclaimed Christ, a Christology, which he believes, must address the questions concerning life and the world of the modern man.[131]

Following are the four claims that Kasper uses as specific pointers to link the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith:[132]

a) Jesus' 'I' sayings and the authority of his words which signify that Jesus spoke for God.[133]
b) Jesus' amazing and unconditional love towards sinners and his fundamental option for the poor. Through these gestures, God's love and mercy become tangible to humanity.
c) Jesus' inauguration of the 'Kingdom of God' and his invitation to inherit this kingdom by opting for it, consequently a decision for Jesus and thus for God.
d) Jesus' unique and filial relationship to the Father, his unique and incomparable intimacy with God, initially through a gradual and conscious self-awareness, eventually attaining its climax in his perfect union and oneness with God.

In the chapters to come, these elements will be elaborately discussed so as to have a comprehensive and an overall view of Kasper's Christology. However, it could be ascertained from the above observations that Scripture, besides presenting Jesus' consciousness as Son of God, also testifies to the truth and proclaims a sublime unity of the divine and human in Jesus. Kasper writes:

> Jesus' personal 'Abba' relationship expresses his sending by the Father in time, a commission which he accepted in obedience. And this manifests the eternal relation of the Son to the Father, and hence indirectly the eternal deity of the Son (his pre-existence), and the trinitarian mystery as a whole. Consequently, the whole of Christology and trinitarian doctrine developed after Easter is the interpretation and exposition of what was the centre

[131] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 19.
[132] Cf. Doss, *Christ in the Spirit*, 119-120.
[133] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 72-88. In this second chapter Kasper takes up the fundamental concept of Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God, and presents Jesus as the spokesperson of God, promising liberation to humanity from forces of evil.

> and foundation of Jesus' life, ministry and death: his unique personal relationship to God, his Father.[134]

Thus, post-Easter Christology can be said to be the empirical unfolding of the reality of Jesus' life. All that is implicit in Jesus' words and deeds become explicit especially through and after the Easter happenings. In the words of Kasper: "What Jesus lived before Easter ontically is after Easter expressed ontologically."[135] In other words, Kasper sees a mutual intertwining of the pre-Easter words and deeds of Jesus with the post-Easter happenings.

In this context the Easter-event, as well as the recurring appearances of Jesus, become the basis and foundation of Christian faith. This, on the one hand, evokes faith in the risen Christ and, on the other hand, strengthens this faith. Hence, it can be interpreted as experiences of faith.[136] Thus, the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith are not two separate blocks in the history of salvation; rather, there is continuity between the two and this unity is already seen in the Pauline letter to the Romans 1:3-4. Here St. Paul brings together the earthly Jesus and the risen Christ in his salutation: "… the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead…" This unity without confusion or change, without division or separation, has been again affirmed in the two-nature Christology of Chalcedon:

> The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (*prosopon*) and one hypostasis. He is not split or divided into two persons, but he is one and the same Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as formerly the prophets and later Jesus Christ himself have taught us about him and as has been handed down to us by the Symbol of the Fathers.[137]

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[134] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 105-106.

[135] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 110; idem, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 174, 244; idem, „Aufgaben der Christologie Heute," in *Christologie im Präsens: Kritische Sichtung neuer Entwürfe*, ed. Aron Schilson und Walter Kasper (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1974), 138. Also see W. Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1964), 345-349.

[136] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 139-140. Kasper also highlights the non-identifiable element involved in Christ's appearances, since in many instances, Jesus manifests himself especially during his departure as he returns to his divine dimension.

[137] Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 228. See no. 615.

Again as the Scripture testifies, "He (Jesus) is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:3). The Catholic Church has always defended as truth Jesus' two natures, and asserted that neither the divine nature was changed or altered when the Word became flesh, nor the two natures mixed together (Eutychianism or Monophysitism).

1.2.3.3 Walter Kasper's Spirit Christology

Kasper maintains that the pneumatological dimension of Christology was to a great extent stunted, if not totally abandoned, especially in Scholastic theology. A traditional theology which almost forgot the Spirit, he maintains, was one of the decisive reasons for spiritual barrenness. Hence, he found the need to rediscover the pneumatological dimension of Christology. The Spirit cannot and should not be in any way underestimated because the Spirit, says Kasper, is the executive and implementing organ of Christ.[138] He further claims,

> For the life that has its origin in the Father, and is given to us in the Son, is made our interior, personal possession by the Holy Spirit, operating through the ministry of the church. That which has its origin in the Father and its centre in the Son reaches its completion in the Holy Spirit.[139]

Kasper appears to have made an elaborate study of the role of the Spirit, especially in the Old Testament and also of Jesus' relationship with the Spirit, not only in his public ministry, but also the Spirit's concrete presence and working in the world today. According to Kasper, the Gospels present Jesus as the bearer of the Spirit that was already effective in the Old Testament and which was promised in its fullness at the messianic end times (Last Days) (Joel 2:28f; Acts 2:17f). Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18-20; Lk 1:35), baptised and anointed for the messianic work through the

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[138] Walter Kasper, „Aufgaben der Christologie Heute," 146-147. For the history of Pneumatology see Walter Kasper, ed., *Gegenwart des Geistes. Aspekte der Pneumatologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1979); Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912); George Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie. Beiträge zur historischen Theologie*, 21 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956); Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch. Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* (München: Kaiser, 1972); Antony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit – In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), specially see Part III – The Holy Spirit in Modern Theology and Today, 293-467.

[139] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 198.

Spirit (Mk 1:10; Mt 3:16; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32), worked with the power of the Holy Spirit and this Spirit of God was always upon him (Lk 4:14, 18); on the cross he offered himself without blemish to God through the eternal Spirit (Heb 9:14) and, finally, he himself is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45). However, Christology appeared in all these events to be almost a function of Pneumatology and therefore, Kasper argues, it would not be surprising if Spirit-Christology, under suspicion, is regarded as Adoptionism.

Analysing the role of the Spirit in the post-resurrection era still further, Kasper argues that, in the risen Lord, the final eschatological future of the effectiveness of the Spirit has been accomplished in a unique and unsurpassable fashion. Now the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9; Phil 1:19), the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6), now the "Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:17), and "in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body… and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). Thus, Kasper concludes that the work of the Spirit is to teach and remind us of all that Jesus has said (Jn 14:26; 16:13) and to make Christ present. The Spirit will declare to us things that are to come (Jn 16:13), and will teach us to do the works that Jesus had done and even greater works than these (Jn 14:13). The Spirit is 'the promised' (Lk 24:49), and God has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a first instalment (2 Cor 1:22). Admitting that we are still at the beginning of such a pneumatological Christology, Kasper here takes keen interest in developing and unfolding a comprehensive understanding of Spirit Christology. Besides taking such a biblical approach, Kasper also attempts to investigate this issue, historically and dogmatically.

Though, as mentioned earlier, Kasper is faithful to the christological proclamations of the great Chalcedon Council, he nevertheless sees some drawbacks in its ultimate presentation of the two-nature dogma. He is aware of concrete difficulties in its understanding of abstract terms like 'one person or *hypostasis*' and 'two natures' as well as the dogmatic formulations of truths pertaining to the nature and person of Jesus Christ, explained with four negatives – "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."[140] The Council also seems to overemphasise the inner constitution of the divine and the human subject, Jesus. As a response to these difficulties confronted in

[140] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 238; idem, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," in *Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie*, ed. Andreas Bsteh (Mödling: St. Gabriel, 1987), 120. Cf. also Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Vol. I. From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), second revised edition, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 543-550; Shenouda M. Ishak, *Christology and the Council of Chalcedon* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2013).

the Chalcedon, Kasper emphasises Jesus' relationship with his Father and at the same time highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus and his union with his Father. A question now arises as to whether Kasper, through his Christology, is aiming to broaden the confines of Chalcedon by bringing in clarity of thought, new forms of articulation, and especially by laying emphasis in his writings on the following:

a) Jesus' total humanity; entirely human like us in everything except sin.[141]
b) Jesus' '*Abba*-consciousness,' his personal and a non-transferable relationship with his Father, nurtured and strengthened through prayer and interior reflection, reflected in his freedom and obedience.[142]
c) Jesus' resurrection and subsequent appearances, giving continuity to the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.[143]
d) Jesus' uniqueness and universal significance through a pneumatologically oriented Christology.[144]

Kasper identifies an intimate relationship between Christology and Pneumatology. He writes:

> What makes Jesus into Christ? The answer of the Scripture is: Jesus is the Christ as it was he who was anointed with the Holy Spirit. To talk of Jesus Christ without making reference to the Holy Spirit and being in the Spirit would, according to Scripture, be futile (cf. 1 Cor 12:3), a Christology without Pneumatology, a pointless endeavour… The rediscovery of the pneumatological dimension, therefore, confronts us with what is probably the most important and most far-reaching re-orientation in Christology.[145]

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[141] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 48-52. Kasper has elaborately discussed the humanity of Jesus, his words and deed in his *Jesus the Christ*, 65-123. He also argues that history is the legitimate starting point for theology. See also Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 158-197; idem, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, trans. V. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 159-166; idem, *The Methods of Dogmatic Theology*, 53-54. According to Rahner also, the non-mythological understanding of Christ is only possible if Jesus' humanity is thought of as a real symbol of God.

[142] Cf. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 104-105; idem, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 173-178. Kasper adopts this idea from F. Schleiermacher. Cf. F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T and T Clark, 1999), 385-389. Cf. also Kasper, „Einer aus der Trinität," 329-330.

[143] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 124-160.

[144] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 22-24; idem, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ;" in *The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ: In Dialogue with the Religions*, ed. Massimo Serretti, trans. Teresa Talavera and David C. Schindler (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004); 6-18.

[145] Kasper, „Aufgaben der Christologie Heute," 146; Doss, *Christ in the Spirit*, 127.

Kasper believes that a subordinate role has been allotted to the Holy Spirit especially by traditional theology. It views the Spirit only as a vessel, a carrier of the works of Jesus Christ in the Church today, a bond that links Christ with the Church. Such a thought-pattern naturally led to a deficiency in the recognition of the Spirit's christological affiliation and consequently concealed the preeminent emphasis and significance of Christ. It is here that the pneumatological Christology of Kasper plays a predominant and remarkable role in highlighting the importance of the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus. Kasper achieves this by presenting "Jesus as the bearer and giver of the Spirit," in whom "the activity of the Spirit reached its perfection in such a way that the Spirit becomes the Spirit of Christ, and the work of Christ becomes the work of the Spirit."[146] How does Kasper describe the Holy Spirit? For him, "Spirit is God's living power, his living and life-giving presence in the world and in history; Spirit is God's power over creation and history."[147]

The operative power of the Spirit is witnessed in the Scriptures on different significant occasions (Gen 1:2; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 16:13; Is 42:1; Ezek 11: 19). Subsequently, it is the Spirit that leads the entire creation to its final destiny and fulfilment. Kasper therefore, like Paul Tillich, calls the Spirit, "the compendium of eschatological hope and eschatological salvation. He is the power of the new being."[148] Kasper also convincingly describes how the activity of the Spirit reaches its goal in Jesus in a supreme and ultimate way, when he writes:

> There is only one instance in history where the Spirit found acceptance in a unique way, totally undistorted and untarnished – in Jesus Christ. In the power of the Spirit, he was wholly a mould and receptacle for God's self-communication through the Logos. He is this in an utterly unique way, so that he is God's love, the meaning of all reality, in person. The universal historical activity of the Spirit therefore reached its goal in him in a way that is ultimate.[149]

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[146] Doss, *Christ in the Spirit*, 127.

[147] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 255; idem, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 200-214. Here Kasper enumerates in detail the activities of the Holy Spirit in creation and in the history of salvation.

[148] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 255. St. Paul gives a fitting description to the universal, creative and operative power of the Spirit in the world in his letter to the Romans 8:18-30. Cf. also O. Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1963), 619f; E. Käsemann, *An die Römer* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), 219-234.

[149] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 267. Kasper also sees the entire life and fate of Jesus Christ to be taking place in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. For the scriptural references that he uses, see 251-252.

Kasper explains that according to the creed, the Holy Spirit is not a mere impersonal gift, or simply God in his creative, life-giving and saving presence in the world and in the Church. He is also a personal giver of these gifts, being the third Person of the Trinity. Further Kasper argues: the Spirit must not be allowed to be thought of as a creature of the Father; at the same time, he must not be said to be begotten by the Father as the Son is; he stands in a unique relation to the Father as his origin.[150] The Holy Spirit, for Kasper, is God's self-communication in the Son and the principle of creation and sanctification.

In conclusion, Kasper's Spirit Christology is an attempt to accentuate and highlight the predominant role of the Spirit in the unity of God and Jesus right before the creation (ontological unity), its efficacious role in Jesus' humanity (incarnation and in the realisation of Jesus' mission), in the climax of his mission (passion, death and resurrection), and at present, its universal mediating character. The Spirit Christology of Kasper is in no way intended to reject or replace Logos Christology; rather, it should be seen as a complementing factor because of Kasper's faithfulness to Chalcedon and Nicaea and also to the Tradition, thereby acknowledging the *Logos* as the subject of the Christ event.[151]

1.3 Problems in Christology Today

Students in the early stages of their theological studies frequently ask legitimate questions like: Why are studies of antiquarian discussions on christological issues of the past, which seem irrelevant to our current modern concerns, necessary? Secondly, what is the point of these finely nuanced disputes and what difference do they make in the end? There is a general tendency that one often accepts the tenets of one's faith, without much explicit reflections on them. Yet, it is to be admitted that one also has an inherent need to make sense of what one experiences and believes. Therefore, it is most natural that as the Church began to establish and organise herself, defining its distinctive identity apart from Judaism, out of which it principally sprang, Christians began to ask doctrinal questions like: Who is Jesus after all? What is the nature of the salvation that he claims to have brought about? How is he different from other religious leaders? How is he different from humankind and, finally, how is he similar to us?

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[150] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 210-214.

[151] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 251.

Questions that are asked today, as far as Christology is concerned, are vastly different from those of the early centuries. According to Hunter Brown, associate professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Western Ontario, Canada, Kasper believes that:

> Modern and postmodern developments have created a wide range of challenges for theology. They have challenged correspondence theories of truth, referential theories of language, and particularly metaphysical accounts of the world and of the human person… they have repeatedly exposed the deeply historical character of scripture, church history, and dogmatic as well as ethical thought, and have challenged the very possibility of perennially meaningful and authoritative texts, much less dogmatic traditions.[152]

These modern questions that arise are naturally related to humanity's needs and circumstances. Nowadays, people often speak of the need for contextual theology, a theology that is capable of addressing the questions that arise in particular contexts. This section outlines, besides some significant christological difficulties, two crucial issues that have not only generated discussions in different times and contexts, but have even created tensions between religious leaders and sects. One pertains directly to the person of Jesus and his identity in the historical framework, and the other relates to the salvific universality of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to note here that there are many personalities who have shown tendencies of rejection of the canonical Gospels as a reliable source for the historical Jesus, for example, Burton Mack, Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. Even the Pauline letters are not considered by these to be valid sources of historical knowledge.[153] However, it has been evident that, regardless of what these and many others think, believe, and propagate, Jesus Christ has been a predominant figure in the history throughout these twenty centuries, to the extent that even calendars take their origin from his birth. In addition, as a means of bridging the gap between these two thought patterns, 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus' has been a leading theme and area of historical research. This

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[152] Cf. Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 155-159. Also Hunter Brown, "Kasper, Modernity and Postmodernity," *Journal of Dharma* 22, no. 3 (1997): 209. For a detailed text refer also Walter Kasper and Joachim Gnilka, *Christologische Schwerpunkte* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1980).

[153] Fr. Arul Pragasam has very well sketched out these personalities and their ideologies in his article, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship," *VJTR* 62, no. 4 (1998): 251-269.

great shift to a historical outlook took place around the beginning of the nineteenth century.[154]

1.3.1 The Historical Jesus: A Thorough (Re) Search

The Enlightenment era of the eithteenth century produced series of investigations on the historical Jesus. Albert Schweitzer described this quest for the historical Jesus as "the greatest achievement of German theology."[155] Rationalists attempted to challenge the traditional Christian teachings about Jesus Christ and discouraged the reading and understanding of Scripture as literal truth, also called as naturalistic literalism. They further argued that the image of Jesus had changed with the times and personal convictions of different authors, and hence, there was a great need to re-interpret the life and teachings of Jesus.

Kasper, discussing the problem of the historical Jesus,[156] begins his investigation by establishing and subsequently corroborating that Jesus is certainly a historical figure of world-importance, whose short lifespan gave rise to a series of events, to the extent of even altering "the world not only religiously but spiritually, intellectually, and socially."[157] The historical quest, a popular *modus operandi* to access the finest details and particulars of the life and message of Jesus, is gaining high momentum today. This prominent personality and the historical quest of him have a lasting effect not only on contemporary Christianity but also on the entire civilisation with different cultures.

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[154] On this see Walter Kasper, *Das Absolute in der Geschichte. Philosophie und Theologie der Gschichte in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1965); idem, *Glaube und Geschichte* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1970); Peter Hünermann, *Der Durchbruch des geschichtlichen Denkens im 19. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1967); Gerhard Bauer, *Geschichtlichkeit. Wege und Irrwege eines Begriffs* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963); Cf. also A. Darlap and J. Splett, "History and Historicity," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. III, Karl Rahner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1969), 31-39.

[155] James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight, ed., *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 3.

[156] Cf. Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 155-169. Here Kasper discusses in detail the historical nature of faith and emphasises 'History' as our biggest problem today. Also cf. G. Krüger, *Freiheit und Weltverantwortung. Aufsätze zur Philosophie der Geschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1958), 97. Kasper broadly outlines the questions thrown up by historical scholarship and especially the questions of exegesis and the history of doctrine raised by men like Richard Simon, Solomon Semler and later Baur and D. F. Strauss.

[157] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 26; idem, „Wer is Jesus Christus für uns heute? Zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um die Gottesschonschaft Jesu," *ThQ* 154 (1974): 210-214; idem, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," *Theologie der Gegenwart* 16 (1973): 233-241.

From the theological perspective, Jesus Christ is made accessible to us through the christological *credo* of the early Church.[158] But the idea is turning into a fact, namely, that it is no longer possible to discern any trace of the original spirit of Jesus in the churches today since they appear to be more institutionalised, having developed institutional rigidity, institutional self-interest, desire for power and authority. All such tendencies are leading to a modern outcry, a so-called secret protest: "Jesus, yes – the Church, no!"[159] In such a form of institutionalisation, there is a practical danger that the Church, on the one hand, subsumes Jesus Christ taking his place, and on the other hand, fails to proclaim and testify Jesus Christ, but rather engages in her own witness and testimony. If such is the case, Christology then, Kasper opines, would become "ideological insurance for ecclesiology."[160] It is therefore apt and necessary to briefly survey the issue of the historical Jesus, beginning with its genesis, its gradual process, up to its present situation.

1.3.1.1 The First (Old) Quest for the Historical Jesus in Two Phases

As one of the final effects of Enlightenment, the middle and late nineteenth century saw European theologians applying historical-critical scholarship to the Gospel narratives. Quite a good number of summaries of the life of Jesus developed, some among them even sensationalistic, not because any surprising data surfaced, but because the canonical Gospels were being reread in new ways.

It began with Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768)[161] who drew an essential distinction between the teachings of Jesus, the first *systema*, and the teachings of the apostles, the second *systema*, thereby distinguishing between the preaching of Jesus and that of the apostles' faith in Christ. He asserted, "'I find great cause to separate

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[158] Kasper is of the view that even though the gospels contain much detailed and authentic historical material regarding Jesus, they are not historical witnesses in the modern sense. He terms them as testimonies of faith. Therefore, he is convinced that the faith of the first Christian churches is today for us the only access road-way to Jesus of Nazareth.

[159] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 27. Cf also Walter Kasper and Jürgen Moltmann, *Jesus ja – Kirche nein*? Theologische Meditationen 32 (Zürich: Benziger, 1973).

[160] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 28. Kasper, addressing this difficulty, presumes that both Christology and Ecclesiology are running short of their original identities.

[161] Reimarus composed a treatise rejecting miracles and accusing biblical authors of fraud, but did not publish his findings. In his work, *Apologia or Defence of the Rational Worshippers of God*, he made his findings available only to his close friends. After his death, Gotthold Lessing, in 1774-1778, published the "*Wolfenbüttel Fragments*," namely, the seven fragments of this Hamburg Professor of Oriental Languages without indicating the identity of the author.

completely what the apostles say in their own writings from that which Jesus himself actually said and taught."[162]

Reimarus identified the core of Jesus' teaching in his preaching of the immanence of the kingdom of heaven and the call to repentance. The Jewish hearers understood this teaching of Jesus as a promise of worldly kingdom for which they had long awaited and hoped for. Reimarus points out that Jesus was a Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic figure, while Christianity, which evidently detached itself from Judaism, was then a new creation of the Apostles.

Furthermore, Reimarus tries to identify and explain "the discrepancy between the political and messianic message of Jesus and the apostles' proclamation of Christ, who brings redemption from suffering, who rises and comes again, by an objective theory of deception. The disciples of Jesus had stolen Christ's body (cf. Mt 28:11-15), so that they did not have to feel that they had failed… and after fifty days (when the body could no longer be identified) they had proclaimed his resurrection and his imminent return."[163] Through this radical thesis, Kasper strongly feels that Reimarus, with his popular theory of first *systema* (the teachings of Jesus) and second *systema* (the teachings of the apostles), "discredited the most progressive theology of his time."[164] The methodological separation between the historical Jesus and the apostles' belief in Christ remains normative even today, as the teaching of Jesus is being examined anew in the Jewish context.

In 1835-36, Strauss, publishing his sensational *Life of Jesus,*[165] provoked another great controversy by considering the old supernatural explanation of Jesus as untenable, and the modern rationalistic interpretation as too external, thus postulating a third way: the mythic interpretation, which in no way denied the historical core. He applied to the Gospels the concept of myth, already current in the Old Testament scholarship of his time. Thereby, he tried to demonstrate that the mythical approach to the Jesus tradition

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[162] Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1998), 3. This work is the translation of the German *Der historische Jesus. Ein Lehrbuch*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996).

[163] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 3.

[164] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 29.

[165] This was a two volume *Life of Jesus*. Cf. David F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu: Kritisch Bearbeitet*, Vol. I (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835) and Vol. II (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1836).

could serve as a synthesis of two extremes: inadequate interpretations of supernaturalism and rationalism. He saw myth at work, especially wherever the laws of nature are contravened in the Gospel accounts.[166]

The second phase of the quest was optimistic as regards the exploration of the historical Jesus. During the Wilhelmine Period in Germany (1871-1918), the heyday of theological liberalism and the classical 'quest of the historical Jesus,' scholars hoped that by reconstructing the historical person of Jesus using historical criticism, they could renew Christian faith. This entire venture seems to have been advocated by Henrich Julius Holtzmann (1832-1910).

While Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860) demonstrated the priority of the Synoptic Gospels over the Gospel of John, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832-1910), helped the two-source theory developed by Gottlob Wilke and Christian Hermann Weisse to achieve lasting recognition.[167] Mark, a source which hitherto had been overshadowed, and Q, a source first reconstructed by scholars, were now regarded as the earliest and most reliable sources for the historical Jesus. Theissen and Merz maintain:

> Holtzmann took over from the Gospel of Mark the outline of the life of Jesus, reading out of it a biographical development with the turning point in Mark 8; Jesus' messianic consciousness had formed in Galilee, and in Caesarea Philippi he showed himself to the disciples as Messiah. The authentic sayings of Jesus reconstructed from the Logia source were inserted into the biographical framework derived from Mark… The liberal 'lives of Jesus' are the result of a combination of the aprioristic notion of a development of the personality of Jesus reflected in the sources with an acute literary-critical analysis. They believe that they can rediscover the ideal personality of their author in the sources about Jesus.[168]

Indeed, this phase was an optimistic attempt at the liberal quest of the historical Jesus.

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[166] Certainly Strauss does not dispute that the narratives also contain historical reminiscences, but he was not interested in these, since his sole concern was to demonstrate the omnipresence of myth.

[167] The Two-Source Theory, popularly known as the Two-Source Hypothesis (or 2SH) is an explanation for the synoptic problem, trying to solve the pattern of similarities and differences between the first three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This theory posits that the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke were based on two sources, namely, the Gospel of Mark and a lost, hypothetical textual source called Q (comes from the German *Quelle*, meaning source).

[168] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 5.

1.3.1.2 The Collapse of the First Quest: The No-Quest Period

In this final phase of theological liberalism, three scholarly insights led to the collapse of the first quest of the historical Jesus. Albert Schweitzer's (1875-1965) book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, showed that the images in the life of Jesus were projections.[169] He tried to demonstrate that the different pictorial presentations of Jesus, provided by different authors, were nothing but demonstration of ethical values, worth striving. This opinion of Schweitzer concerning the historical Jesus appeared like a debate with the pictures of Jesus simultaneously provided by liberalism of his time. Since his method was one of confrontation, he intended to challenge all that was inaccurate and non-historical. That liberal view rested on four assumptions:

a) The life of Jesus falls into two contrasting epochs: an earlier, successful period of activity in the area of Galilee, followed by a retreat to the north, and then a later journey to Jerusalem characterised by hostility and eventually death;
b) The passion story has been influenced by Pauline atonement theories;
c) The Kingdom of God is conceived as an ethical society of service to humanity, a theme that dominates the passion narrative; and finally
d) The success of the passion depended on the disciples' understanding of the kingdom in this sense (ethical society), and acting on it.[170]

William Wrede (1859-1906) in 1901 showed "the tendentious character of the earliest extant sources of the life of Jesus. He argued that the Gospel of Mark is an expression of community dogma… Wrede claimed that the unhistorical 'messianic secret theory' shaped the whole of the Gospel of Mark."[171] The fragmentary character of the Gospels was demonstrated by Karl Ludwig Schmidt (1891-1956), who highlighted that "the Jesus

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[169] The first German edition appeared in 1906 under the title *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, and this was translated into English as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1910. The title of the considerably enlarged second edition of 1913 was *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*; unfortunately the additions made in this edition have never appeared in English.

[170] Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century*. 1900-1950 (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 28. Also see Albert Schweitzer's summary in *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, translated with introduction by Walter Lowrie (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1950), 61-72. This is a translation of *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis: Eine Skizze des Lebens Jesu* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901).

[171] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 6. This destroyed the confidence that it was possible to distinguish between the history of Jesus and the image of Christ after Easter by recourse to two ancient sources.

tradition consists of 'small units' and that the chronological and geographical 'framework of the story of Jesus,'… was created secondarily by the evangelist Mark."[172]

The scepticism that these insights provoked was partly absorbed in certain theological motives, for example, in the work of Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), the most significant exegete of dialectical theology, which had its acme in the period between 1919 and 1968. It maintained:

> Dialectical theology opposes God and the world so radically that they touch only at one point - as a tangent touches a circle: in the 'that' of Jesus' coming and the 'that' of his departure, in the cross and in the resurrection. It was not what Jesus had said and done which was thought to be decisive but what God had said and done in the cross and resurrection. The message of this action of God, the New Testament 'kerygma,' is not the historical Jesus but the 'kerygmatic Christ.'[173]

Research into the history of religions made it clear that, theologically, Jesus belongs to Judaism,[174] and that Christianity begins only with Easter. From this, Bultmann drew the conclusion that the teachings of Jesus are of no significance for a Christian theology.[175] That provided his students with the starting point to pose anew the question of the historical Jesus.

1.3.1.3 The New Quest

Ernst Käsemann (1906-1998), a student of Bultmann began the "new quest" in 1953.[176] Theissen and Merz explain:

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[172] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 6. This destroyed the possibility of reading a development in the personality of Jesus from the sequence of pericopes. Moreover, form criticism recognised that even the 'small units' have been primarily shaped by community need and only secondarily by historical recollections.

[173] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 6.

[174] Cf. Wellhausen's dictum which has become famous: 'Jesus was not a Christian but a Jew,' *Einleitung in die ersten drei Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1911), 102. Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 7.

[175] Bultmann's book *Theology*, as it is well known, begins with the statement: 'The message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself' (p. 3).

[176] The 'new' quest was sparked by E. Käsemann's lecture 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus' delivered in Marburg in 1953.

> (This quest) developed in the circle of Bultmann pupils, began from the kerygmatic Christ and asked whether his exaltation, grounded in the cross and the resurrection, has any 'support' in the proclamation of Jesus before Easter. The Christological kerygma commits itself to the 'quest of the historical Jesus,' as it refers to an earthly figure and speaks of it as an earthly figure in the Gospels. The identity of the earthly Jesus and the exalted Christ is presupposed in all the earliest Christian writings… The methodological basis of the 'quest of the historical Jesus' is the confidence that a critically ensured minimum of 'authentic' Jesus tradition can be found, if everything is excluded that can be derived from both Judaism and earliest Christianity.[177]

The quest for pre-Easter support for the kerygma of Christ is independent of whether Jesus used christological titles like Son of Man, Messiah, Son of God etc. Rather, this claim is implicit in his conduct and his proclamation:

a) as Jesus' criticism of the Law, which questions the foundations of all ancient religions; a 'call of freedom' (Käsemann);
b) as the claim of the love of God for sinners, both in Jesus' conduct and in his proclamation (Fuchs);
c) as the paradoxical unity of the radicalised Torah and radical grace, in which God's will occurs and takes place in Jesus (H. Braun);
d) as 'Jesus' faith,' which makes it possible for him to participate in God's omnipotence: 'all is possible to the one who believes' (Ebeling).[178]

All these studies, trying to closely analyse the preaching of Jesus and especially the claims and the criticisms that he made, presented his personality as one, in contrast to Judaism.

1.3.1.4 The Third Quest: Accent on the History of Jesus

The fading out of the Bultmann School clearly indicated the one-sidedness of the 'new quest' of the historical Jesus. "It was primarily governed by the theological interest in finding a basis for Christian identity by marking it off from Judaism and in safeguarding this identity by marking it off from earliest Christian heresies (like Gnosticism and

[177] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 7.
[178] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 8.

Enthusiasm). The 'new quest' therefore preferred 'orthodox' sources… sociological interest replaced theological interest, and the concern to find Jesus a place in Judaism replaced the demarcation of Jesus from Judaism, an openness to non-canonical sources also replaced the preference for canonical sources."[179]

Ben Witherington III, an American New Testament Scholar opines that it must be recognised at the very outset, "*before* examining the Third Quest, that the most the historical-critical method can accomplish is to establish a good *probability* as to whether or not a certain saying or action reported of Jesus did actually originate with him and whether or not a given interpretation of Jesus has some historical basis."[180]

The tension characteristic of the Jewish society of the first-century Christian era is reflected in the appearances and fate of Jesus. Comparable 'millenarian' renewal movements[181] in other cultures are always shaped by a dominant prophetic figure. One can also draw conclusions from them for primitive Christianity: there is a social continuity between the pre-Easter circle around Jesus and the Christianity after Easter.[182] The earliest Christian itinerant charismatics continued the preaching and life-style of Jesus, viewing him as the founder of a renewal movement within Judaism. In terms of content, the preaching of Jesus was 'restoration eschatology,' aiming to restore the Jewish people. There is also greater continuity between Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ, since the status of Jesus after Easter was articulated with the help of the Jewish-biblical pattern of interpretation.[183]

It should be noted that gradually the Jesus research within the 'third quest' split into different trends. On the one hand, "there is a return to a 'non-eschatological picture of

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[179] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 10.

[180] Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 12.

[181] 'Millenarian' comes from 'millennium' (1000) and originally refers to the thousand year kingdom of Revelation 20. Movements which expect a fundamental change of things are called millenarian (or chiliastic).

[182] Cf. H. Schürmann, „Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition," in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: Evangeliische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 342-373. He was the first to recognise this continuity between Jesus and primitive Christianity, even before the beginning of the 'third quest.'

[183] Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, *Versöhnung, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit. Aufsätze zur biblischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981) 9-26. This chapter is titled as „Jesus als Versöhner. Überlegung zum Problem der Darstellung Jesu im Rahmen einer biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments."

Jesus' in which Jesus becomes the advocate of a paradoxical existential wisdom influenced by Cynicism" and on the other hand, as occurred previously, "Jesus is interpreted in the framework of his eschatology and placed at the centre of Judaism, for the restoration of which he hoped."[184]

1.3.1.5 Theological Relevance of the Historical Quest

The penultimate stage of christological thought began when, in 1953, Ernst Käsemann lectured in Marburg on 'The Problem of Historical Jesus,' suggesting a resumption of the old liberal quest for the historical Jesus, which no doubt provided stimulus for a veritable flood of commentaries. Kasper, at this point, makes some crucial and decisive observations. He stresses that along with the fundamental theological explanations, the historico-exegetical reasons were also behind the new emphasis. He maintains:

> In historico-exegetical terms, the situation was not so hopeless; instead 'the Synoptics contain much more authentic traditional material than the other side will allow'. The Gospels give us no reasons for resignation and scepticism. Rather they allow us to see the historical figure of Jesus in all his power, though in quite a different way from chronicles and historical narratives.[185]

Thus, the gospels face a dual problem: mythisation of history and the historicisation of a myth. Kasper finally derives the following theological emphasis of the historical approach to the study of this topic:

a) Rejection of the myth; grounding of the new *kairos*, the great turning-point; rejection of Docetism and the conviction that Revelation occurred truly 'in the flesh.' In other words, the credence of the reality of the Incarnation and the salvific meaning of the true humanity of Jesus.
b) Attempting not to return to liberal theology, and hence, the name 'the New Quest.' According to Käsemann, "interpretations and traditions are fundamentally

[184] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 11.

[185] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 33; see also G. Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth*, ninth edition (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 21.

inseparable."[186] Here it is not a matter of grounding faith historically, but rather a matter of critically distinguishing true from false proclamations. E. Fuchs reduced this methodological procedure to a precise formula: "If earlier on we interpreted the historical Jesus with the aid of the primitive Christian kerygma, today we interpret that kerygma with the aid of historical Jesus – each direction in interpretation complements the other."[187]

c) The historical Jesus maintains a hermeneutical circle, proceeding from the premise of present belief and measuring that faith by its content: Jesus Christ. In a critical way, christological dogma and historical criticism are reconciled. This attempt has two presuppositions: philosophical and theological.[188]

It is philosophical in nature: Modern historical method is anything but presuppositionless; it "tries to discern history 'objectively', and also to naturalise and neutralise it… it perceives everything according to the law of analogy and presupposes a general correlation of all events… The future can only be understood in terms of the past."[189] How are then we to undertand and explain Eschatology: the things that are, but not yet?

It is also theological in nature: The historical quest takes for granted that the reality of Jesus is the historical reality of the earthly Jesus. How then is one to explain the resurrection of Jesus? Is the resurrection of Jesus a legitimisation of the earthly Jesus or something new and never-before-present, which not only confirms the earthly Jesus but simultaneously continues his 'cause' in a new way? Kasper sees the resurrection as "a redemptive event with its own 'content'" and hence "the kerygma too, in addition to the proclamation and cause of the earthly Jesus, must have a 'more' and a 'new' aspect." [190]

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[186] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 34. Cf. also E. Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* I, sixth edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970), 190-195. Käsemann deals this issue under the title „Das Problem des historischen Jesu."

[187] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 34. Cf. also E. Fuchs, *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, second edition (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), VII.

[188] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 34-35.

[189] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 34-35.

[190] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 35.

Hence, the content and primary criterion of Christology is the earthly Jesus, and the risen, exalted Christ, which Kasper calls "a Christology of complementarity."[191] He emphasises the proximate relation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith as he maintains:

> For Revelation occurs not only in the earthly Jesus, but just as much, more indeed, in the Resurrection and the imparting of the Spirit. Jesus today is living 'in the Spirit'… If we had only a historical way of reaching Jesus Christ, then Jesus would be a dead letter for us – indeed a stultifying and enslaving law. He is the Gospel that makes us free only in the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3: 4-18).[192]

The historical research into the life of Jesus identified two major views: that Jesus of Nazareth "never in fact existed" and that "Jesus was not a modern man and he cannot be modernised in any way and anyone who comes closer to him is bound to discover a radical strangeness in him."[193] It may be concluded that the multiplicity of pictures of Jesus presented, is no reason to suspect that they are self-portraits of their authors. Historical imagination has the ability to create lot of fiction and this could be true concerning the figure of Jesus. Kasper agrees that historical thinking is essentially critical in nature, and that it seeks to know how it really was, seeking carefully to separate later overlays from the original painting. But at the same time, he clearly asserts that historical research cannot provide dogmatic proof. Historical methodology cannot presume to exhibit the one final authority amid the many authorities; theology alone, with the "eyes of faith" can undertake to do that. Thus, historical theology would not only positively ascertain *fides credenda*, but also serve the *intellectus fidei*.[194]

Having made a general survey of the crucial issue 'Historical Jesus,' and having established certain factual elements, some discussions and clarifications on the second important problem in Christology are needed, namely, *Dominus Iesus*, a declaration that

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[191] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 35. The Church belief in the earthly Jesus, has a relatively autonomous criterion, a once-and-for all yardstick by which it should continually measure itself. But to make the historical Jesus the entire and only valid content of faith in Christ is impossible.

[192] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 35. Jesus can be a living presence to us, both an earthly Jesus and the risen exalted Christ, only when we do not surrender ourselves to a so-called loose enthusiastic dogmatism. Cf. J. A. Möhler, *Neue Untersuchungen der Lehrgegensätze zwischen den Katholiken und Protestanten*, ed. P. Schanz (Regenburg: Manz, 1900).

[193] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 39.

[194] Kasper, *Methods of Dogmatic Theology*, 37-41.

created a turbulence not only in the Catholic Church, but also affected her relationship with other Christian denominations.

1.3.2 *Dominus Iesus*[195]*:* A Monograph on Christ's Uniqueness

Dominus Iesus, a declaration on the 'Unicity and the Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church,' issued on August 6, 2000, by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, brought the leaders of different churches and denominations on a common platform.[196] This document addresses not only what is absolutely central and primary to Christianity and Christ himself, but also defends the most crucial aspect of the Church's claim today, the Catholic dogma, that the Catholic Church is the sole true Church of Christ. This claim which soon became provocative and controversial, causing negative reactions, is still the subject of dispute. It generated an atmosphere of unease as some Catholic intellectuals reacted with embarrassment and anger, and non-Catholic theologians with perplexity. The reference to this document at this juncture is important because it deals directly with the most significant and highly contested christological issue. Kasper, the then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, with the background of his own christological and theological engagement, coupled with the enormous experience that he had acquired through his ecumenical ventures, defended this Vatican document. More specific and critical issues concerning this declaration are also discussed in the fourth chapter.

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[195] *Dominus Iesus* was signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and also by Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, its secretary. It was later published on August 6, 2000, after being duly approved by the then Pope John Paul II.

[196] For more literature on *Dominus Iesus* see, Michael J. Rainer, ed., „*Dominus Iesus*": *Anstößige Wahrheit oder anstößige Kirche? Dokumente, Hintergründe, Standpunkte und Folgerungen* (Münster: Lit, 2001). In this work see the important articles of Jan-Heiner Tück, „Zur Kritik der ‚pluralistischen Ekklesiolgie' – Anmerkung zu *Dominus Iesus* 16 und 17," 229-245 and also of John D'Arcy May, "Catholic Fundamentalism? Some Implications of *Dominus Iesus* for Dialogue and Peacemaking," 112-133. See also Raimund Stadlmann, *Ekklesiologien in Auseinandersetzung mit der römischen Erklärung Dominus Iesus* (Sondermagazin 2) (2002); Jan-Heiner Tück, „Abschied von der Rückkehr-Ökumene: Das II. Vatikanum und die ökumenische Öffnung der katholischen Kirche," in *Konfessionelle Identität und Kirchengemeinschaft*, ed. Helmut Hoping und Jan-Heiner Tück (Münster: Lit, 2000), 43-52; Gerhard Ludwig Müller, ed., *Die Heilsuniversalität Christi und der Kirche. Originaltexte und Studien der römischen Glaubenskongregation zur Erklärung „Dominus Jesus"* (Würzburg: Echter, 2003); Steven L. Jacob, "*Dominus Iesus*: Why This? Why Now?" *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 22, no. 2 (2004): 12-17; Peter Hünermann, „Stellungnahme zur Erklärung der Glaubenskongregation ‚*Dominus Iesus*'," in *Glaubenswissenschaft*? *Theologie im Spannungsfeld von Glaube, Rationalität und Öffentlichkeit*, ed. Peter Neuner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2002), 167-172; Frank D. Macchia, "*Dominus Iesus*: A Pentecostal Perspective," *Pneuma* 22, no. 1 (2000): 169-175; Christoph Schönborn, „*Dominus Iesus*" und der interreligiöse Dialog," in *Diplomatie im Dienst der Seelsorge*, ed. Egon Kapellari (Graz: Styria, 2002), 113-123.

1.3.2.1 *Dominus Iesus*: Reception, Reactions and Responses

Majority of the articles and writings on *Dominus Iesus* appear to be very critical, some even condemnatory, to the extent of naming this document a so-called pastoral disaster. But there are a few commentaries which came to the defence of the Vatican.[197]

The secular press criticised the document vehemently as it saw the Church slackening and reverting to the attitudes of pre-Vatican II. This was an overreacting from the media sector as they failed to recognise that this document only restated and reaffirmed the position of the Catholic Church. However, if this declaration is carefully and thoughtfully reread, there might be a danger of easily perceiving the confrontational tone it assumes. The contents of the declaration may be simply a reassertion of magisterial teachings, but the language used appears to many commentators to be blunt, insensitive, and to a certain extent, divisive, especially as far as the Church's various partners in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue are concerned. Some even believe that the formulation of the text seems to be contrary to the genuine spirit of openness and mutual understanding.[198]

Some even question to what extent other important Vatican offices like The Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue were involved and contributed in the framing of the document's content and manner of expression. However, in spite of the criticisms, many positive elements of this declaration are not to be overlooked. The document, articulating the theological positing of the Catholic Church, makes certain issues clear and distinct.

The majority of the negative reactions came from Christians who belong to the other "ecclesial communities" (*Dominus Iesus* prefers that they be called so) for suggesting that their own churches "are not Churches in the proper sense" and that there only "exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church" (DI 17). *Dominus Iesus* primarily reaffirms about the Lordship of Christ and, this being a Christian document, is meant to assert the supremacy of the Christian "theological faith," vis-à-vis the "belief"

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[197] Edmund Chia, "FABC's Response to Dominus Jesus," *EAPR* 38, no. 3 (2001), 231.

[198] Cf. Dennis J. Billy, "*Dominus Jesus*: Reception and Levels of Dialogue," *Pastoral Life* 50, no. 1 (2001): 3.

of the other religions.[199] Strictly speaking, however, if *Dominus Iesus* is intended to target Christians, then it could be said that, the target has been missed, since many Christians have failed to regard the declaration's true theme and content.

1.3.2.2 *Dominus Iesus*: The Tasks of Asian Theologians

Fr. Aloysius Pieris, an Asian theologian, argues the justifiability of the absolute authority of the Vatican, in issuing decrees and warnings to local churches in the name of the papal magisterium, without any dialogue and discussions with bishops and theologians of other local churches. It appears to him that the Church seems to be returning to medieval ecclesiolatry and Roman centralism. Juvenal, the Roman poet's famous question relating to the power-wielders and arbitrators of ancient Rome, needs to be asked once more with regard to the Vatican guardians of Faith: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*? Who will guard the guardians themselves (guarding the guardians of Truth from falling into error)?[200] Aloysius Pieris opines:

> For, the tone and the insinuations of the document *Dominus Iesus* seem to smack of an ecclesiology and a Christology that cannot accept the logical consequences of the Conciliar option to treat the church and other religions in the perspectives of God's Reign (Christ). The Asians have to continue their search for a theology of religions that respects what Pope John Paul II calls "the clearly soteriological character" of such religions. The Asian local churches of the Roman communion have had centuries of experience in being the church amidst other "clearly soteriological" systems, and furthermore, in being a church among other (denominational) churches struggling together ecumenically in the mission of inter-religious dialogue and collaboration.[201]

However, issuing this declaration, the Church in no way disregards, neglects or shows disrespect to the other world religions. On the contrary, the Church, through this declaration, shows her commitment and fidelity to God and his revelation, fidelity to Jesus Christ and his message, and to the Holy Spirit, who moves and transforms human hearts, especially of those responding to the promptings of the Spirit.

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[199] Edmund Chia, "FABC's Response to Dominus Jesus," 232.

[200] Aloysius Pieris argued this in a talk that he delivered at the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, Colombo, Sri Lanka on September 30, 2000.

[201] Aloysius Pieris, "The Roman Catholic Perception of Other Churches and Other Religion after the Vatican's *Dominus Jesus*," *EAPR* 38, no. 3 (2001): 229.

Finally, *Dominus Iesus* is a "reaffirmation of what the church believes and lives with an ever abiding sense of her own unworthiness as she welcomes all persons of good will to reflect on its meaning."[202] Asian theologians have a herculean task ahead of them in meaningfully interpreting and imparting the teachings of *Dominus Iesus* in the Asian, multi-religious context: recognizing Jesus Christ as Lord, the belief that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, and the Unity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. How far can they be successful? These issues are discussesd in the later chapters.

1.3.2.3 *Dominus Iesus*: CDF's Anxiety about the Asian Churches

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), supposed to defend the faith of the Church by promoting true doctrines, many believe, appears to have assumed the role of a tribunal. Some even question: "Can the CDF always have the absolute final word?" The CDF not only defends and promotes doctrines but also conducts inquiries as and when needed. It conducts investigations in secret, and even the targeted theologians are often unaware of such investigations. Vatican history shows that the CDF has also been following Asian theologians, who are grappling with the prevailing dilemma of religious pluralism, very closely. The concern of the CDF is understandable but however, not always justified. For Asians, especially Indians, old categories seem inadequate, and hence, they are looking for new and meaningful expressions. As a result, a series of warning and cautionary statements have been issued from the CDF in the recent past. It is interesting to enumerate a few warnings by the CDF under the leadership of its then head, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.[203]

a) Warning Asian theologians about the danger of emphasising the centrality of the Reign of God in contrast with Christ and the Church (March 1993).
b) Excommunicating Tissa Balasuriya after he refused to sign a "Profession of Faith" formulated by the CDF, despite Balasuriya having signed the Profession of Faith promulgated by Paul VI (January 1997).

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[202] Billy, "*Dominus Jesus*," 4. Dennis here quotes Cardinal Law of Boston who tried to offer an even-handed explanation of *Dominus Iesus.*

[203] The following list of warnings is as enumerated by John L. Allen in "Perils of Pluralism," National Catholic Report, September 15, 2000.

c) Describing Buddhism as a kind of "spiritual auto-eroticism" and agreeing to the opinion that the greatest threat to Christianity in the twenty-sixth century will be from Buddhism and not from Marxism (March 1997).

d) Diluting, in the final document issued from Rome, the Asian position on a clash recorded in April-May 1998, between the Asian Bishops' Conference and the Vatican on the question of "salvation" of non-Christian religions.

e) Censuring certain ideas of the Indian Jesuit Tony de Mello for uncritically blending Christian and Eastern religious teachings, thus paving the way to "Religious Indifferentism" (August 1998).

f) Investigating another Jesuit, Jacques Dupuis for advocating a theology of religious pluralism in a book which most Asians consider very orthodox, based as it is on Church documents (October 1998).

g) Michael Amaladoss had been interrogated to seek clarifications for some of his statements concerning the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, which were suspected to be drifting from conciliar dogmatic formulation. He was summoned by the present Prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller (April 2014).

These warnings provoke one to conclude, that probably Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger believed and feared that the Asians probably seemed to separate Jesus Christ from the Kingdom of God and the church from Christ.[204]

It is interesting to note that this Declaration *Dominus Iesus* seemed to target, predominantly Asians, because its primary intent was to counter the "religious relativists," in particular those postulating "relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism" (DI 4). In such a case, it could be said that the theologians of the East (the seminal thinkers of Asia in general and of India in particular), are the main addressees. In other words, it is believed that *Dominus Iesus* in effect, is a document probably meant for the Church in the East or Asia. However, Edmund Chia, who served as executive secretary of the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue office of the FABC

[204] Cf. Pieris, "The Roman Catholic Perception of Other Churches and Other Religion after the Vatican's *Dominus Jesus*," 226.

maintains that, there has not been an expected response from the bishops and theologians of Asia to these different interpretations of this Declaration.[205]

1.3.3 Some Other Contemporary Christological Issues

How relevant is religion to modern man? Is man not a self-sufficient being who has dominated the world? The ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles once said in his *Antigone*: "Many are the wonders but there is no greater wonder than man."[206] Experience, at the same time, has taught that man is a complex phenomenon, and religion is one of his many concerns. The history of humankind reveals that these two beliefs are practically universal: a belief in a being superior to the human person, and a conviction that existence is not limited to this world, but that there is continuity of life beyond this world. When the early Christians proclaimed that 'Jesus is the Christ,' they confessed salvation, redemption, liberation and resurrection in Jesus Christ. According to Kasper, this profession seemed to be a direct answer to the question: 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?' (Mt 11:3). He further argues the relevance of this question in today's contemporary world, which constantly uses phrases like secularisation, desacralisation, demythologisation, and even de-ideologisation not only as technical, but also as theological jargon, to manifest the entire present day situation.[207] Modern man, with his speculation and rationalisation, naturally tends to consider questions pertaining to the absolute and the infinite as inconsequential, empty and trivial. These questions, which remain as residue in man's memory, are frequently ignored or completely deleted from his considerations.

One has to also duly acknowledge, that there is also a deep spiritual yearning within humans that drives one to explore and acquire wisdom about human nature, the world, ultimate realities like God, life and death, enduring values, and paths to spiritual

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[205] Edmund Chia, "FABC's Response to Dominus Jesus," 232-233.

[206] Demetrios J. Constantelos, "The Religious Quest as a Preparation for Christianity," in *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*. For the entire artice visit: http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8171 (accessed November 23, 2010).

[207] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 41. Read also Hermann Lübbe, *Säkularisierung: Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs* (Freiburg: Alber, 1965); Friedrich Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit. Die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem* (Stuttgart: Vorwerk, 1953); Hartmut Bartsch, ed., *Probleme der Entsakralisierung* (München: Kaiser, 1970).

maturity.[208] Making a breakthrough in exploring these spheres, especially those concerning ultimate truths like God, one encounters various problems, questions, challenges and confrontations.

1.3.3.1 The Religious Quest for Jesus Christ and Challenges

Human beings as part of creation are not self-sufficient, for they owe their origin and existence to an ultimate Being, commonly called God. The idea of the existence of God and his role in human history provides a deep sense of the sacred, within human persons and also in the entire cosmos, thus establishing an interaction between the divine and the human. Divinity is "present in all places and filling all things" (*pantahou paron kai to panta pleron*), and humanity "lives, moves, and has its existence" *(en auto zomen kai kinoumentha kai esmen*) in the Divinity, as the ancient Greek philosophers and poets Epemenides and Aratos express;[209] which even Paul of Tarsus re-emphasised. "For 'In him we live and move and have our being;' as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring'" (Acts 17:28).

God as Spirit, Power, and Essence is invisible, but the created reality all around points towards the Creator and his creative energy, which is active in creation. He is the ultimate cause of laws, decrees, and principles of morality.[210] The urge of the human person to seek communion with the divine and the desire to rise above nature is revealed in the world in various ways and through different methods, the most popular one being religion, through which man attempts constantly to reach out for God.[211] In this sense, it could be said that there exists a drive in humans for the divine and this instinct identifies human life with religion.

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[208] http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/theology/comparative/courses/RelQuest.htm (accessed June 1, 2011). Please note that this web-page does not exist anymore.

[209] Constantelos, "The Religious Quest as a Preparation for Christianity."

[210] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 116-117. According to Kasper the divine mystery is manifested in the midst of the world. This mystery could be encountered in nature, which is God's creature pointing to its creator.

[211] Constantelos, "The Religious Quest for the Preparation for Christianity." Religion is derived from the Latin *religio*, which originally meant respect for what is sacred; later, it came to mean holding fast to conscientiousness, to the instinct that is innate in the human being and that controls, prompts, approves, reprimands, and guides the human being in his/her relations with the surrounding cosmos and with fellow human beings. The Greek term for religion is *threskeia* and it means instinctive awe before the cosmos, and thus, the worship of the divine. *Threskeia* is derived from the verb *throsko*, which means to leap up in joyful expectation, to search.

The secularisation process, however, Kasper acknowledges, springs from a basic principle and modern thought – the principle of subjectivity launched with the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*, man considering himself as "the lord of reality" and "the reference-point of reality."[212] Man believes that he is in the process of subjugating and controlling everything. Consequently, God becomes obviously dispensable, cognitive and a working hypothesis, and the world, subsequently, is envisaged as demythologised and desacralised. Evidently then, the demythologisation of the objective world indubitably might result in the de-objectification of the image of God and religious ideas. But, in spite of Enlightenment and Romanticism, Kasper dares to postulate an "emotive phenomenon of freedom and of liberation from objective pressures,"[213] designating 'Emancipation' as a germane catchword. Here, a clear distinction should be drawn between two similar words having different nuances: emancipation – a present-day experience of the world, a historico-philosophical category for the process of enlightenment and freedom; and redemption – a word used to articulate and represent the Christian message of liberation. It is a principal task as well as a challenge for present-day Christology to decide the relation between these: "redemption understood in a Christian perspective and emancipation understood as the modern age understands it."[214]

1.3.3.2 Demythologisation and Anthropological Emphasis of Christology

One cannot speak of demythologisation without making a reference to Rudolf Bultmann and his *New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Message*.[215] Kasper hints at the fact that Bultmann's demythologising created a stir as Bultmann attempted an "existential interpretation" of the biblical message, purely

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[212] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 42. Kasper argues that when man becomes the measure of all things, placing himself in the centre, reality then, which is just objective to him, is controlled and guided through science and technology.

[213] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 42. Here Kasper makes a reference to J.B. Metz, „Erlösung und Emanzipation," in *Erlösung und Emanzipation*, *QD* 61, ed. L Scheffczyk (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 121.

[214] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 43. Kant understood emancipation as gradual overcoming of immaturity which brings one liberation. Karl Marx, speaking about emancipation, predominantly attacked religion and strongly recommended emancipation from religion as the necessary condition, which in turn, would pave way for all other emancipation.

[215] The above mentioned *New Testament and Mythology* is a lecture delivered by Bultmann in which he called on interpreters to replace traditional supernaturalism and reject doctrines such as the pre-existence of Christ. He wanted to clarify the kerygma, or gospel proclamation, by stripping it of elements of the first-century "mythical world picture" that had potential to alienate modern people from Christian faith. Cf. also Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *The Historical Jesus: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Vol. I (London: Routledge, 2004), 328.

through "modern rational thinking."[216] Demythologisation strongly believed that traditional religious ideas and convictions were mythological, especially in light of human freedom and maturity. If so, even the traditional faith in Jesus Christ could not be an exception. Besides, biblical language like incarnation, the virgin birth, wonder-worker, descent to the dead, rising on the third day, seated at the right hand of God, coming again to judge the living and the dead, etc. sound ancient and obsolete, a language belonging to the mythical world. Kasper maintains that out of intellectual honesty and for the sake of a more genuine idea of God, we have to demythologise, especially the language that belongs to the mythic world-view.[217]

Concerning mythology, Schubert Ogden outlines a few characteristics of myth even as Bultmann sees it.

a) Myth is a form of objectification and here God, for example, is seen as an object out there. This linguistic expression is part of a process of bringing God within the compass of a subject-object relationship so that he fits our human conceptualisations.
b) Myth has an etiological function and is explanatory (e.g. the universe is explained by means of myth).
c) Myth also gives us a double view of history: a history of God or the gods and secular history.[218]

Kasper feels that a demythologisation is not only permissible but also necessary to disclose the authentic meaning of belief in Christ and to tackle other related issues. However, care must also be taken, and a clear distinction made between permissible and impermissible demythologisation. It is "permissible if it helps us to show Jesus Christ as the location of divine and human freedom," and it is "impermissible when it cancels the

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[216] Walter Kasper, "Individual Salvation and Eschatological Consummation," in *Faith and the Future: Studies in Christian Eschatology*, ed. John Galvin (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 11.

[217] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 43. This is not a direct question which could be easily answered. One should at the very outset clearly define what mythologisation and demythologisation means today and also their essential characteristics and features.

[218] Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christus und Mythologie: Das Neue Testament im Licht der Bibelkritik* (Hamburg: Furche, 1967), 33-41; Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 44-48; For more, also visit: www.sdonline.org.uk/seniorschool/re/folder6/Bultmann.doc (accessed November 23, 2010). This web-page has been at present deleted.

underivable originality and novelty of Jesus Christ, and makes Christology a kind of anthropology."[219]

Besides demythologising, Kasper, in his attempt to answer the challenge of the modern world, also has recourse to the christological contributions of Karl Rahner, which certainly have an anthropological emphasis, a "bridgehead between Catholic theology and the hermeneutical discussion of recent years."[220] Rahner lays down the assertion that a non-mythological understanding of Christ is only possible if Jesus' humanity is thought of as a symbol of God, which he later terms as 'Christology from below.'[221] This approach aims to show that the divine Incarnation deducts nothing from man's autonomy and originality, but is the unique highest instance of the essential realisation of human reality.[222] Rahner's 'Christology from below' extends the approach of what has always been a transcendental Christology, an approach often misunderstood as Rahner's wish to derive the content of Christology *a priori* from human thought and from human existence as it is lived.[223]

However, Kasper points out the danger of reducing Christology to its anthropological significance and seeking to counter classical ontological Christology with a more modern

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[219] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 48.

[220] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 48. For more detailed understanding of Rahner's Christology and his essays on Christ, see Karl Rahner's *Theological Investigations*, especially volumes – I, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX and X. See also Karl Rahner, *Ich Glaube an Jesus Christus* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1968). For more on Theological Anthropology, also see Karl Rahner, „Anthropologie," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. I, ed. Karl Rahner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1967), 181; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodramatik*, Band II/I (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1976); Johann Auer, *Die Welt - Gottes Schöpfung, Kleine katholische Dogmatik*, Band III (Regensburg: Pustet, 1975), 192-388; Jürgen Moltmann, *Mensch. Christliche Anthropologie in den Konflikten der Gegenwart, Themen der Theologie*, Band XI (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1971); E. Jüngel, „Der Gott entsprechend Mensch," in *Neue Anthropologie*, Band VI, Hans-Georg Gadamer und Paul Vogler (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975), 342-372; Helmut Thielicke, *Mensch sein – Mensch werden. Entwurf einer christlichen Anthropologie* (München: Piper, 1976).

[221] For a detailed explanation of this concept cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. X, trans. D. Bourke (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), also see Karl Rahner, „Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie," in *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch, QD* 55, Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1972), 47, 65-68.

[222] Cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 105-120. He discusses the question about God becoming man and argues how could Word become flesh when God is 'Unchangeable' and *actus purus*. He affirms that in incarnation the change and transition takes place in the created reality which is assumed, not in the *Logos*.

[223] Cf. Kasper, „Christologie von unten?" 152-159; idem, *Jesus the Christ*, 49. One must make sure that Rahner's transcendental method may not be made to approximate to Kant's. Rahner actually warns against the illusion that a transcendental Christology could be made to work by methodological abstraction from the historical Jesus Christ. For a clarification and detailed explanation cf. Rahner and Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch*, 18f, 20f, and 65f.

functional Christology.[224] He further indicates that if Christology is interpreted this way, namely, one-sided, it could perhaps affect the interpretation of soteriology also. Kasper argues:

> For then it is ultimately speaking sufficient if Jesus Christ is above all the true and perfect human being, who reveals God to us as the secret of human beings and the world, and who moves us to the appropriate behaviour. This stands the soteriological argumentation of the Fathers on its head.[225]

Karl Adam also protested against scholarly trends where Jesus is seen as just a man and nothing more and vehemently objects that, "it would be an idle game with empty words if we were still to talk about redemption here."[226] From this, Kasper deduces that 'if Christology represents the unique fulfilment of anthropology, it follows that everyone who fully accepts his life as a human being has thereby, also implicitly accepted the Son of Man.' He further argues that the history of Jesus Christ is the ultimate and definitive interpretation of a person, since in this history, according to Christian faith, the mystery of God and man has decisively appeared.[227] Also, according to Rahner, "such an individual has already encountered Jesus Christ without knowing however" that he has indeed met the person whom Christianity refers to as just Jesus of Nazareth. With his theory of anonymous Christianity, Rahner "is able to make the universality of belief in Christ and the salvation offered by Jesus Christ theologically comprehensible in a new

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[224] For more on this cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Christological Confession of the World Council of Churches," in *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. James C. G. Grieg (London: SCM Press, 1955), 273f. It is also seen in an extreme form in Herbert Braun for whom Christology is just one variant form of anthropology. Cf. H. Braun, „Der Sinn der neutestamentlichen Christologie," in his *Gesammelte Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1962), 272.

[225] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 75. Trends of this kind are also found among some Catholic authors. Cf. Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 442; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: the Christian Experience in the Modern World*, trans. J. S. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1980), 646f; Karl Lehmann, „Heiliger Geist, Befreiung zum Menschsein – Teilhabe am göttlichen Leben," in *Gegenwart des Geistes, QD* 85 (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), 193f.

[226] Cf. Karl Adam, *Jesus Christus*, fifth edition (Augsburg: Haas and Grabherr, 1938). Here Karl Adam further argues that if Jesus were just a man and nothing more, he could give the world nothing more than what is human and the world should have still borne the human fate and misery, sin and death.

[227] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Das theologische Wesen des Menschen," in *Unser Wissen vom Menschen. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen anthropologischer Erkenntnisse?* ed. Walter Kasper (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1977), 103. Cf. also Wilhelm Dilthey, „Die drei Grundformen der Systeme in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels und andere Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Idealismus*, Gesammelte Schriften IV, sixth edition, Wilhelm Dilthey (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990), 529.

way, and without demythologising historical Christianity to the point of almost nothingness."[228]

Two main observations need to be made, which Kasper uncovers and which have a strong bearing on his Christology. He poses an interesting question: Is it possible for man, as a finite being, in his reaching out to infinity, to conceive of the infinite? Can he have more than a negative notion of the infinite? Does not man then confront an inevitable mystery? What then in the infinite remains open, ambiguous and ambivalent, and hence, can be interpreted in various ways? Reality then, for Kasper, is demonstrably greater than man; man cannot overtake it. Man, therefore, is faced with an irremovable mystery. Secondly, according to Kasper, one can deduce neither the content of the Christ-idea nor the realisation of that content in a single individual. One needs to acknowledge the fact that what one hopes for, in the deepest part of one's being and nature, has been fulfiled in Jesus Christ in an exceptional way, surpassing every human reality.[229]

1.3.3.3 Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism

Kasper believes that an adequate Christology today cannot omit an account of the relation of Jesus to other religious mediations of God. It is to be lamented that such topics are addressed often at the end of a Christology discourse, as an addendum or corollary. Today, this aspect requires serious theological reflection since religious pluralism is a characteristic of the situation of Christian life, especially so in India, and thus, becomes an intrinsic dimension of the interpretation of Jesus and Christ. Theologians today do acknowledge that the narrow christological issues must be addressed within the framework of the place of Jesus Christ among other religions. At the same time, however, theologians must be cognisant of the various Council teachings and also the latest teachings of the Church, and beware extrimists like Paul Knitter, who formulated the idea; Jesus is the "true" but "not the only" bearer of God's salvation.[230]

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[228] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 50; idem, „Christologie von unten?" 154-155. Also see Rahner's essays on History of the World and Salvation History, Christianity and the non-Christian Religions and Christianity and the 'New Man' in his *Theological Investigations*, Vol. V, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 97-153.

[229] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 48-52.

[230] Paul Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 72-83. See also Paul Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions;* idem, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010); idem, *No Other Name: A Critical*

Roger Haight articulates, "Pluralism means differences with a wider unity."[231] Here, it refers to human beings, their cultures and ideologies, understandings, ideas and values. Some common denominators, some defining elements constitute a unity that is differentiated. This means that at some level one can find commonalities among the differing parties that bind them together, even though the term pluralism emphasises differences.[232] Christianity and religious pluralism, particularly in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious continent like Asia has constantly occasioned misunderstanding and misapprehension.

In the Indian context, there is a general consensus among the population that freedom of religion and the right to preservation and practice of different religions is essential and needed. Each religion is individual and has its significance within the context of its own origin and background. The situation today demands openness for diverse cultures, languages, and modes of thoughts in the religious environment.[233] When the entire Christian environment of the world is closely analysed, it will be noted that the understanding of Jesus Christ, his life and mission also differs in different places, due to factors like inculturation and pluralism of religion. In other words, these Christian beliefs, even though doctrinally guided by the Roman Church (Vatican), show a wide variety of christological views among believers. Hence, religious pluralism also affects the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ.

Two broadly defined theological parallel reactions can be presented depicting the positive and negative sides of religious pluralism. One group of theologians stresses the particular, individual and specific identity of each religion, and hence, the differences and overall diversity that separate one religion from another.[234] Influenced by philosophy, linguistics,

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Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985); idem, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be A Christian* (UK: Oneworld Publication, 2009). See also Paul Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed, John Hick and Paul Knitter, seventh edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998).

[231] Roger Haight, "The Impact of Pluralism on Christology," in *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, ed. Merrigen and Haers (Leuven: University Press, 2000), 31.

[232] Nicholas Rescher, *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 96.

[233] Hans Waldenfels, „Ist Er wirklich der Erlöser der Welt? Antworten aus Indien und China," in *Mein Herr und mein Gott: Christus bekennen und verkündigen*, ed. George Augustine, Klaus Krämer and Markus Schulze (Freiburg: Herder, 2013), 481-482.

[234] For example, Joseph A. DiNoia, *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992); Paul Griffiths, *An Apology of Apologetics: A Study in the*

and the social sciences, proponents of this position encounter major challenges finding any common substance represented by the word "religion."[235] While not hostile to dialogue among religions, the goal is better understood as explications and defence of the self-understanding of each religion, terminating in some degree of mutual understanding. This particular element of post-modern consciousness tends towards isolation rather than an interaction that would facilitate accommodations.[236]

Another group of theologians sees the themes of historicity and relativity as breaking down barriers between people that were previously considered to be impenetrable.[237] Pluralistic theologians, as the name indicates, do not advocate the assimilation of all religions into one, but look for common denominators among religions, which help them to collectively work for humanity, eradicate human sufferings and address concrete problems of human life and existence.[238]

Today, there are three basic positions on the question of Christianity in relation to other religions. The most historic is exclusivism, which claims that Jesus is the only way to one true God, and all other ways are excluded since there is no salvation in non-Christian religions. Karl Barth interpreted that God's self-manifestation is realised only in Jesus Christ and hence asserted exclusive religious claim to Christianity. The second view, pluralism, holds that all religions are equally valid ways to God and there is nothing unique about Christ and that he is but one of the many influential religious teachers and leaders. The chief exponent of this view is John Hick, together with Paul Knitter and Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Inclusivism is the third position, and is currently considered as a bridge between the two approaches. It regards that while salvation is made possible only by the cross of Christ, it can be obtained also by people who are externally a part of other

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Logic of Inter-religious Dialogue (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991); S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995).

[235] John Cobb firmly denies that the religions of the world have any common genus. For him, they all share nothing in common as religions. Cf. his, "Beyond Pluralism," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. Gavin D' Costa (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 81-84.

[236] Cf. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions*, 38-53, for a good description of how post-modern appreciations of particularity and diversity come to bear on the problems of interreligious dialogue.

[237] For example, John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Knitter, *No Other Name?* and the position of Knitter also in Swidler and Mojzes, ed., *The Uniqueness of Jesus*; Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

[238] The theme of dialogue is central to Knitter's project of religious pluralism. See specially Paul Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions*, where the issue of Christology is neatly distinguished from the more fundamental issue of the radical need for interreligious dialogue and mutual co-operation.

religious traditions and, consequently, they too can be saved. This position was popularised by Roman Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner, Raimundo Panikkar, Stanley Samartha, and Hans Küng. The problem of religious pluralism in India is discussed in detail in the last two chapters.

1.3.3.4 Some Relevant Christological Questions

Having examined the concept of religious pluralism and its understanding today, this section ends with some practical questions that are prompted by these trends and movements in Christology. There is a need to analyse these issues so that some practial solutions could be proposed.

The first question refers, naturally, to the root of the entire issue concerning the person of Jesus of Nazareth.[239] An attempt to address this question concerning the nature of Christianity, without having some basic ideas of who the earthly Jesus really was, is necessarily incomplete. How is Jesus to be understood in his public appearance and ministry? The vigour with which 'the Jesus research' is progressing sheds some light on this question. The entire christological project of Kasper is an attempt to answer this question, "Who is Jesus Christ, Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"[240]

The second serious issue that Christology must address today is the event of the resurrection, which is analysed and argued differently in the present context; as a problem, a contention, a puzzle, and at times, also as a controversy. There are no

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[239] In recent years there has been a wide range of books and writings on Jesus Christ and Christology. Cf. J. C. Cavadini and L. Holt, ed., *Who Do You Say That I Am? Confessing the Mystery of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); T. L. Inbody, *The Many Faces of Christology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002); John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 2003); M. J. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (London: SPCK, 1999); L. W. Hurtado, *How on Earth did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005); George Augustine, ed., *Christus – Gottes Schöpferisches Wort* (Freiburg: Herder, 2010); Augustine, Krämer und Schulze, ed., *Mein Herr und mein Gott*; Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Beiträge zur Christologie*, Gesammelte Schriften, Band VI, ed. Gerhard Ludwig Müller (Freigburg: Herder, 2014); Vincente Ferrer Barriendos, *Jesus Christus unser Erlöser. Einführung in die Christologie* (Wien: Fassbaender, 2008); Hermann Häring, ed., *Jesus von Nazareth in der wissenschaflichen Diskussion* (Wien: Lit-Verl., 2008); Paul Hoffmann, *Jesus von Nazareth und die Kirche* (Stuttgart: KBW Verl., Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2009); Richard Lopes, *Indian Christology of the Way* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verl., 2011); Karl-Heinz Menke, *Jesus ist Gott der Sohn. Denkformen und Brennpunkte der Christologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2008); Ralf K. Wüstenberg, *Christologie: Wie man heute theologisch von Jesus sprechen kann* (München: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 2009).

[240] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 203-222. In this article, Kasper deals this christological issue from different perspectives.

christological discussions and there cannot be any such deliberations without the mention of the resurrection, which is the subject of debate, also because of its contentious nature. Though there are different approaches to the meaning of Jesus' resurrection, it should be noted that the resurrection of Jesus is and remains the core of Christian faith.

Christology also must "address the humanly caused and systematically ingrained human suffering that so characterises our world situation today."[241] Practical questions concerning human life and existence, especially of those marginalised and weaker section of the society cannot be neglected. They are to be addressed not because Christology has enduring and lasting answers to all their problems, but because the life of Jesus, who himself was poor, has a great relevance for them and a bearing on their practical life situation.

One cannot omit the most problematic question when Christology is discussed on a common platform: the relation of Jesus Christ to the other religions and the meaning of salvation. This has become a crucial issue and has remained an open question. Major world religions consider Jesus to be one of the important religious figures and the salvation he brings as one among many. Answer to these controversial and sensitive issues rest on different criteria, like culture, origin and ancestry of different religious traditions, inter-religious dialogues, etc. Though none have succeeded in producing satisfactory solutions, efforts are still on in this regard.

The final question that must be addressed by any Christology today concerns Jesus' divinity and the doctrine of Trinity[242] as both these themes as inter-related. Here, elements like faithfulness to the Scripture and Christian Tradition, the important Councils of the Church and the use of classical doctrines play a predominant role. Kasper sees a close relationship between exegesis and dogmatics. What one understands under

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[241] Haight, *Jesus*, 25.

[242] For the theology and dogma of the Trinity see George Leonard Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952); Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma: An Historical Study of Its Problem*, trans. S. G. F. Brandon (New York: A and C Black, 1957); Alfred Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* 1. *Die Zeit der Alten Kirche*, fifth edition (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus Mohn, 1985); Bernhard Lohse, *Epochen der Dogmengeschichte*, eighth edition (Münster: Lit, 1994).

Tradition (theological significance) is the substance of the exegetical history of the Scripture effected by the Spirit.[243]

1.3.3.5 The Criteria of Christology

How is humanity to cope with the many diverse and conflicting conversations that relate to present day Christology? Is it possible to handle so many fundamental questions at one time, avoiding or transcending superficiality? Such queries find convincing answers only when one clearly outlines the criteria for Christology today. With regard to the present research, three important criteria are highlighted here that are considered most important in shaping a solid, sensible Christology for today. These are: faithfulness to the Tradition, intelligibility in today's world, and empowerment in Christian life.[244]

The first criterion is faithfulness to the Christian Tradition. According to Catholic teaching, Christian Tradition also includes the Scripture, which is the classical statement of the earliest tradition. Kasper maintains that the "Christian tradition possesses a distinctive focus and freedom because it is rooted in the Gospel, the *Evangelium*."[245] Tradition directly refers to the historical life of the community, which is made available through historical witnesses from the past. *Dei Verbum* categorically explains the relationship and close connection between Tradition and Sacred Scripture when it explains:

> Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one being, and move towards the same goal. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound

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[243] Cf. Kasper, „Prolegomena zur Erneuerung der geistlichen Schriftauslegung," 524-525. Cf. also Walter Kasper, „Tradition als theologisches Erkenntnisprinzip," in *Theologie und Kirche*, Walter Kasper, (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1987), 72-100. Also cf. Joseph Ratzinger, „Ein Versuch zur Frage des Traditionsbegriffs," in *Offenbarung und Überlieferung*, *QD* 25, Karl Rahner und Joseph Ratzinger (Freigburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1965), 25-69.

[244] Haight, *Jesus*, 47.

[245] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Neue Evangelisierung als theologische, pastorale, und geistliche Herausforderung," in *Das Evangelium Jesu Christi*, Vol. V, ed. George Augustin und Klaus Krämer (Freigburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007).

> and spread it abroad by their preaching. Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scritpures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feelings of devotion and reverence.[246]

Haight opines that "Christology is a discipline that represents the faith of a religious community which exists in historical continuity and solidarity with its past. The past is the source of the identity and the formal self-understanding of the community in the present. Often a community's self-identity depends on its being in continuity with its past, especially its genesis and foundation."[247] This is one of the reasons why Kasper today is much renowned, regarded and appreciated in his theological pursuit. In all his ventures, dogmatic as well as ecumenical, he has always remained faithful to the Tradition, dogmas, and the various Councils of the Church.[248]

The second criterion for Christology is intelligibility in today's world, including internal consistency. In other words, the christological faith "should find expression in the belief structures or ways of understanding that fit or corresponds with the way reality is generally understood in a given culture."[249] Christology must be intelligible, credible and coherent, adding up to a unified whole, having "no contradictions within itself, that its elements fit into a unity of intelligibility, or an integral vision of life."[250] The criterion of intelligibility "contains the ideal and the imperative that Christian faith does not fall back into earlier fideism or fundamentalism, that it be open to the new experiences that history and the world continually open up to new generations. Intelligibility represents a quest for new and deeper understanding of how Jesus Christ fits as part of the intelligible world of

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[246] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, no. 9.

[247] Haight, *Jesus*, 48.

[248] Walter Kasper, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verl, 1965); idem, *Die Lehre von der Tradition in der Römischen Schule*, Band 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2011); idem, *Katholische Kirche: Wesen, Wirklichkeit, Sendung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2011) see specially pages 31-38; idem, *Glaube und Geschichte* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verl, 1970); idem, „Schrift und Tradition – eine Quaestio disputata," ThPQ 112 (1964): 205-214; idem, „Tradition als Erkenntnisprinzip: Systematische Überlegungen zur theologischen Relevanz der Geschichte," *ThQ* 155 (1975): 198-215; idem, „Das Verhältnis von Schrift und Tradition: Eine pneumatologische Perspektive," *ThQ* 170 (1990): 161-190; Norbert Podhorecki, *Offenbarung-Schrift-Tradition: Walter Kaspers Beitrag zum Problem der Dogmenhermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001).

[249] Haight, *Jesus*, 49. Haight also makes it clear that by arguing so it is not meant to imply that christological beliefs will be reduced to what can be explained by reason. It is one thing to say that something is intelligible; it is quite another thing to reduce its truth to what can be demonstrated by reason.

[250] Haight, *Jesus*, 49. Here, Haight does not attempt to reduce the christological beliefs to something that can be explained by reason.

God's creation."[251] One of the major obstacles which intelligibility of Christology has to often confront is the unique, exalted personality of Jesus Christ in a multi-cultural and multi-religious world.

The third criterion for Christology is empowerment of the Christian life. Haight argues that, "a Christology that fulfils the first two norms, but does not touch Christian life in a way that opens up possibilities for Christian existence, is inadequate. This is so because the point of all understanding is to direct human action in a way that corresponds more deeply with reality."[252] Further, Christology should correspond to, and engender, a Christian way of life that responds to the ethical challenges of our times.[253] Haight argues:

> Neither the Christian community nor Jesus Christ can be understood apart from life in the world. Jesus has to be considered within the context of an understanding of and attitudes towards the larger portion of human beings who share other religious traditions. Jesus must be appreciated in connection with the moral responsibility that is engaged by the inordinate amount of social injustice and suffering that currently afflict humanity… Jesus must be understood in such a way that he provides an impulse to Christian faith and life that responds to the social ethical crises that face humanity.[254]

Finally, Christology must also describe salvation today in such a way that it corresponds intelligibly to what people actually experience. Facilitating such tangible experiences of salvation, Christology would succeed in reflecting a living spirituality in a concrete and existential human situation, rather than remaining only dogmatic.

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[251] Haight, *Jesus*, 50.

[252] Haight, *Jesus*, 50. This does not mean that the discipline of Christology must appeal directly to the existential experience of all Christians. Rather, the language and logic of Christology must take into account and correlate with the fact of Christian faith and life.

[253] Schubert M. Ogden, in his book, *The Point of Christology* argues that no Christology of reflection can be fully critical that does not concern itself with the truth of the Christology of witness as well as with its meaning. In the eighth chapter of this book, *The Freedom we have in Jesus Christ* (148-168), he further argues for a credibility of a Christology of liberation by showing that its strictly moral implications may well be said to be credible, given the specific requirements of credibility in our present situations.

[254] Haight, *Jesus*, 50-51.

1.3.3.6 The Tasks of Christology Today

The twentieth century has witnessed various approaches to the historicity of Jesus, each having its own advantages and disadvantages. The scope of Christology has remained unfathomable and in a continual state of change down through the centuries, as have the research and new findings, resulting in different contextual Christologies. All these contextual Christologies and contemporary christological debates have Jesus as their alpha (Άλφα), the starting point, and Jesus the Christ, as their omega (Ωμέγα), the destiny. This dogmatic formulation approached from different perspectives, according to Kasper, reveals three fundamental tasks for Christology at the present time.[255]

1.3.3.6.1 Historically Determined Christology

The expression, Jesus is the Christ, is a christological formulation, oriented to a quite specific history and to a unique life and destiny. Neither human nor social needs can deduce this formulation; nor is it extractable, anthropologically or sociologically. Instead, historically determined Christology has to narrate a real, actual story and to bear witness to it, using historical rather than religious methods to construct a verifiable biography of Jesus.[256] Contemporary Christology, hence, is confronted by challenges that are neither mere sophistries of unbelief nor wholly external or irrelevant to systematic Christology. Today, the problems of modern historical research are the quest for the historical Jesus, the quest for the origins of the Easter faith, and the quest for the earliest christological formulation of belief.[257] Kasper here makes a critical observation: it is not enough to examine these issues concerning the historicity of Jesus purely from a historical angle,

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[255] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 20-24. Also cf. Kasper, „Aufgaben der Christologie Heute," 133-151.

[256] As already discussed, this quest for the historical Jesus began in the 18th century with Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who is credited as the father of the Quest for the Historical Jesus, followed by David Friedrich Strauss who asserted that the supernatural elements of the gospels could be treated as myth and this quest went up to William Wrede in the 19th century, who besides his Messianic Secret in the Gospel of Mark also made a critical study on the Second Letter to the Thessalonians where he argued for its inauthenticity. The question concerning "Historical Jesus" was also raised by E. Käsemann and E. Fuchs, taken up and continued by protestant theologians like G. Bornkamm, H. Braun, J. Jeremias, G. Ebeling, F. Gogarten, J. M. Robinson on the one hand, and by catholic theologians like R. Geiselmann, A. Vögtle, H. Schürmann, F. Mußner, H. Küng, J. Blank, R. Pesch on the other hand. See also Walter Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 233-241.

[257] Kasper here considers the attempts of J. R. Geiselmann, dogmatic theologian from Tübingen, important, who in his book *Jesus der Christus* (Stuttgart, 1951), attempted a redefining of Christology (Christology of humiliation and exaltation – *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung*). This problem was further differently posed and questioned by theologians like W. Pannenberg, J. Moltmann, E. Jüngel who tried to address this issue as a Christology of co-relation between historical Jesus and the proclaimed Christ.

but also with an enquiry to ascertain the theological implications and relevance of the historical past.[258]

1.3.3.6.2 Universally Responsible Christology

Given the fact that even though Christology cannot be derived from human or social needs, its universal claim demands, that it be considered and represented in the light of human questions and needs, and in accordance with the problem of the age. Hence, remembrance of Jesus and the christological tradition must be understood as a living tradition and must be preserved in creative loyalty, the only way in which a living faith leading to hope can arise. This universal claim of Christology brings it into encounter and confrontation with philosophy, and to be precise, with metaphysics.[259] In theology, it was extremely difficult to speak about the incarnation of God, and almost impossible, to speak of the suffering and death of God.[260] Indeed, Jesus was considered to be a walking God, his humanity a kind of disguise and staffage, through whom God worked out his plan, since revelation from heaven failed.[261] Kasper maintains that faith in Jesus Christ claims the ultimate and most profound means of reality as a whole. This has been revealed only in Jesus Christ, in a unique and valid manner. The Creed that God revealed himself as the Father, through Jesus Christ and the Spirit, is not just empty, idle speculation, ineffective and without consequences in practical life. On the contrary, this revelation means that the meaning of God's being is love.[262]

The question now is how are we to see the relation between Christology and philosophy, between nature and grace, between God and the world? Secondly, does Christology lie

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[258] Walter Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 210. Kasper emphasises that the question concerning the historicity of Jesus has got a high theological relevance.

[259] Kasper opines that a Christian, on account of his faith, must be a metaphysician in a certain sense because he just cannot have recourse only to social sciences although they are certainly important. At the same time it is important that he has a pluralistic approach to philosophies and theologies and not just insert himself into any predetermined philosophical system, applying some predetermined philosophical categories within Christology.

[260] See Werner Elert, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verl.-Haus, 1957); Küng, *Menschwerdung Gottes*, 622-646.

[261] For further reading see, Franz Xaver Arnold, *Seelsorge aus der Mitte der Heilsgeschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956), 28-34; Karl Rahner, „Zur Theologie der Menschwerdung," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, Band IV (Einsiedeln – Zürich – Köln, 1960), 144, 149, 152. But Rahner took up this task of attempting to address Christology from an anthropological point of view. See Karl Rahner, „Chalcedon – Ende oder Anfang?" in *Das Konzil von Chalcedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band III, ed. Aloys Grillmeier und Heinrich Bacht (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954), 3-49.

[262] Kasper, „Aufgaben der Christologie Heute," 144.

within the God-world relationship or *vice versa*? These questions indicate that in Christology one is ultimately concerned with the Christian understanding of reality in the broadest sense of the word. Christology, hence, in rudimentary terms, also pertains to Christianity's relations with every other science, including politics and culture too.[263]

1.3.3.6.3 Soteriologically Determined Christianity

Kasper combines this third viewpoint with the previous two at a higher level because he finds the preceding two, the essence (History of Jesus) inseparable from the significance (Universality of Jesus). As there are soteriological motives behind all the christological pronouncements of the early Church, Christology and Soteriology form a whole.[264] The purpose of the incarnation was redemption, and the reality of redemption can be ensured and ascertained only when both the true humanity and true divinity of Jesus are defended. One sees these soteriological implications behind all christological motives in the early Church. Hence, Kasper stresses that "the separation between Christology and Soteriology has to be cancelled."[265] Jesus Christ is entirely unique. He is in a radical and unsurpassable way the existence and mission of God the Father, and it is in him that the eschatological goal of the efficacy of the Spirit has been achieved. In other words, in him, God is all in all. The definitive and unsurpassable 'New' has come through Jesus Christ, and the Spirit is available to humanity anew.[266] Hence, to speak about Jesus without mentioning the Spirit would be, according to the Scripture, an unproductive exercise (1 Cor 12:3). Kasper concludes that a Christology without Pneumatology is an unpromising undertaking.[267]

Jesus is neither a carrier nor a symbol of some ideas, nor is he just an impetus or stimulus for a new practical experience. The person and the cause of Jesus (salvation of the world) cannot be separated. Therefore, Kasper asserts that there is no Christianity without

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[263] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 21.

[264] During the Reformation Period, it was not "Christ," but rather a question of the "-ology" that evoked a series of questions. The doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ, his divinity and his humanity and the unity of both were segregated by medieval Scholastics from the doctrine of the work and offices of Christ, rendering Christology as an isolated and abstract teaching on the divine-human constitution of Christ.

[265] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 22.

[266] Hans urs von Balthasar, „Improvisation über Geist und Zukunft," in *Spiritus Creator. Skizzen zur Theologie*, Band III (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verl., 1967), 153.

[267] Kasper, „Aufgaben der Christologie Heute," 146.

confessing Jesus, no Christianity without Christology.[268] According to him Christian discourse should seek to express reality that is "fundamentally ineffable or transcendental," striving to "proclaim the ultimate mystery" which obviously "exceeds our full comprehension and eludes complete articulation in human words and forms." Hence it is very necessary that theology employs "a discourse that is meaningful for the communities and individuals to which it is addressed." Finally, Christian theology must hold together "God's revelation and a specific people's questions and ideas" and "engage in interpretation" as a way "if it has to unite these two realities."[269] Kasper is also aware of the challenges that theologians today face in maintaining a proper balance between Gospel "identity" and "relevance."[270]

According to Kasper, a major task still lies before Christian theology and theologians – to render "an account of the Christian hope to every human being… It is through the reason that it must interpret the uncontingent uniqueness of the hope given by God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit."[271] The only hope of conveying the foregoing character of Christianity to the post-modern period, Kasper argues, rests in making the effort, with Hans Urs Von Balthasar, to transform the self-enclosed classical metaphysics into a metaphysics that is open. Such a metaphysics, Kasper maintains, will be historical to the core.[272] Such an undertaking will foster the understanding of God, which "both grounds human autonomy and brings it to fulfilment."[273] Only such theological developments, in Kasper's judgement,

> Will bring to the fore the depth of Christianity's distinctive form of turn to the subject and to history… Only such developments will eventually be able, without lapsing into a relativistic form of fallibilism, to supplant the heteronomous depictions of God-world

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[268] Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 213.

[269] Kristin M. Colberg, "The Task of Theology," in *Speaking Truth in Love. The Theology of Cardinal Walter Kasper*, ed. Kristen M. Colberg and Robert A. Krieg (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014), 5.

[270] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 15-25; idem, *Theology and Church*, 1-16, 73-79. See also Moltmann, *The Crucified God*.

[271] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 32.

[272] Cf. Walter Kasper, "Postmodern Dogmatics: Towards a Renewed Discussion of Foundations in North America," *Communio* 17 (Summer, 1990): 190. See also Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 92-93.

[273] Kasper, *God of Jesus Christ*, 45.

relations, based upon classical metaphysics which have fuelled modern atheism, and the wholesale secularization of the pursuit of human freedom and autonomy.[274]

Kasper has meaningfully explained the different tasks of Christology and thereby, the mission of the Church today, highlighting the soteriological dimension. This dimension is very relevant for the Church in India and is to be taken up earnestly, especially in the multi-cultural and multi-religious context, where Spirit Christology is gaining acceptance and is gradually spreading wider.

1.4. *Ecclesia in Asia*: Call for a Need of Pedagogy

At this juncture, it is also important to look briefly at the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, an Exhortation on Jesus Christ as the Saviour, and his mission of love and service in Asia given by Pope St. John Paul II in New Delhi, India, on November 6, 1999.[275] This Exhortation gives the churches in Asia some guidelines and directions, including some suggestions and proposals for the witness of the Gospel and the service of human promotion. In general, it calls for a spirit of solidarity, zeal to serve, work, and continue the act of redemption. The mission of the Asian churches of love and service, as rightly mentioned by the Synod Fathers, is conditioned by her self-understanding as the community of disciples of Jesus Christ gathered around her pastors (EA 5). Asians hold dear their religious and cultural values including respect for life which is seen in their compassion for all beings, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, closeness to nature which is predominantly evident in their nature worship and, their sense of community, exhibiting a spirit of tolerance and striving for peaceful co-existence.

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[274] Cf. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 49-53. Also Brown, "Kasper, Modernity and Postmodernity," 223.

[275] For more on *Ecclesia in Asia*, see also, Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 171-183; idem, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 213-214; Peter Nguyen Van Hai, *Lay People in the Asian Church* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015); Peter C. Phan, ed., *The Asian Synod. Texts and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 249-261; Michael Amaladoss, "Expectations from the Asian Synod," in *The Asian Synod. Text and Commentaries*, ed. Phan, 53-72; Peter C. Phan, "A New Christianity, But What Kind?" *Mission Studies* 22, no. 1 (2005): 59-83; Judson B. Trapnell, "The Controversy and its Theological Implications," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 15 (2002): 13-19; Leo Kledon, "Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel in Asia the Narratives of Jesus in the Living Stories of Asia," *Mission Studies* 24, no. 2 (2007): 261-285.

The Apostolic Exhortation has also posed some challenges concerning the proclamation of the salvific message of Jesus, which the churches in Asia have to encounter, address, and discuss at regular intervals, and on different levels. The negative aspects of some media-industries in promoting violence, hedonism, etc., which threaten traditional values together with the effects of individualism and materialism, have posed great challenges to the Church and to the proclamation of her message (EA 7).

The Exhortation also recommends that the Church in Asia should focus her attention on the intense yearning for God displayed by the people and that it should proclaim with vigour, in word and deed, that Jesus is the Saviour (EA 9). Proclaiming Jesus as the only Saviour can present particular difficulties in Asian cultures since many Asian religions teach divine manifestation as mediating salvation. But the Exhortation categorically declares that from the first moment of time to its end, Jesus is one universal Mediator. Even for those who do not explicitly profess faith in him as the Saviour, salvation comes as a grace from Jesus Christ through the communication of the Holy Spirit (EA 14). In this regard, it calls the churches in Asia to follow pedagogy in presenting and proclaiming Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery (EA 20).

The Synod Fathers also noted that the Church must be open to the new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia. This has been one of the greatest challenges of the Synod to the Asian churches and great thinkers, especially to the theologians at work. Indian theologians, in the context of religious pluralism and inculturation, have taken this aspect of the Synod seriously also. In the process, however, they have encountered great difficulties, thus leaving the task of suggesting a suitable pedagogy unfinished. A still deeper and wider exploration is wanting, if Jesus is to be proclaimed as unique, universal, and the only one Mediator and Saviour of the world. This Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented a comprehensive view of Christology since the dawn of the Second Vatican Council and its gradual growth up to the present time. It also ventured to locate the Spirit Christology of Walter Kasper and define its specific elements, which

Kasper developed during the 1970s. Certain significant issues which arose in the course of time pertaining to the historicity of Jesus, the relevance of his death and salvific value of his resurrection, are also touched upon. Such are the conditions and issues of Christology today, in its relationship to Christian theology in general, and in particular, in a society where religious pluralism is predominant.

Kasper opines that present day Christology has to be faithful to Sacred Scripture and sacred Traditions, and also address practical issues concerning humanity and human salvation. Jesus of Nazareth is the messianic bringer of salvation. Though Jesus fits into none of the humanly mentioned categories, however, it is in him, that humanity comes close to God. *Ecclesia in Asia* meaningfully explains how in Jesus salvation was sealed once and for all and how Jesus is Saviour in the fullest sense of the word (EA 11). Kasper attempts to explain, how through Jesus, man finally comes to the truth about himself, and further, how Jesus transforms human heart from within and fulfils every human yearning for the good and every human longing for the divine.

The second and the third chapters will provide an in-depth analysis of the Spirit Christology of Kasper and show how he develops his Christology in the wake of religious pluralism. The concluding chapters, responding to the call of *Ecclesia in Asia* to develop a pedagogy in presenting Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of the world, will endeavour to discuss some relevant questions, especially in the Asian/Indian context. Finally, a genuine attempt will be made to construct a Christology that is relevant today, a Christology that could help in addressing the Asian/Indian scenario.

CHAPTER 2

PART I: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE HEART OF JESUS' MESSAGE

Introduction

In Synoptics, the fundamental teaching of Jesus Christ revolves around the motif 'Kingdom of God' (Hebrew מלכות – *malchut*; Greek Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ - *basileia tou theou*). More than any other elements, the parables and the prophetic sayings on God's Kingdom are certainly the chief elements throughout the gospels. 'The time is fulfiled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news' (Mk 1:15), this is how Jesus commenced his earthly proceedings and embarked on his unique mission. He did this by inviting people to enter into fellowship with God and each other, and assured that the Kingdom could be attained through repentance and love. Rahner puts it rightly, "Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, not himself."[276] Scholarly research has been made by several academicians down through the centuries to re-discover and examine the right meaning of the maxim 'Kingdom of God.'

Kasper maintains that the motif of the 'Kingdom' was the "centre and the framework of Jesus' preaching and mission."[277] In his scholarly theological work, *Jesus the Christ*, Kasper exposes the earthly life of Jesus with his message of the 'Kingdom of God,' giving it a very prominent place. Bringing out the theological significance, he attempts to decipher the features and the nature of this Kingdom in the life and activities of Jesus.

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[276] Karl Rahner, *Christologie-systematisch und exegetisch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1972), 29; Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 233.

[277] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 72. For more on Kingdom of God read also Ernst Staehelin, *Die Verkündigung des Reiches Gottes in der Kirche Jesu Christi: Zeugnisse aus allen Konfessionen*, 7 Volumes (Basel: Reinhardt, 1951-65); Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich: Eine biblischtheologische Studie*, fourth edition (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1965); Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teachings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963); idem, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); idem, *Was lehrte Jesus wirklich*? (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972); Markus Knapp, *Gottes Herrschaft als Zukunft der Welt* (Würzburg: Echter, 1993); Rudolf Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion*, second edition, trans. Floyd Filson and Bertram Lee-Woolf (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2011); Wendell Willis ed., *The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation* (Massachusette: Hendrickson, 1987).

2.1 The Origin and Inauguration of the Kingdom of God

Before venturing into a systematic study of the notion 'Kingdom of God,' two basic issues are to be clarified. On the one hand, it is necessary to know the origin and sources of this key-expression 'Kingdom of God.' From the gospels, especially from the climax in the Markan prologue, it is clear that Jesus began his public activities by solemnly introducing the 'Kingdom of God' and its proximity, making it the leitmotif of his proclamation. The authenticity of this premise however is in question as it oscillates between two main streams of disputing thoughts. According to W. Kelber and his study, this text "provides the hermeneutical key, not primarily to the ministry of Jesus but first and foremost to Markan theology." In other words Kelber opines, "Mark put on the lips of Jesus the program and leading motif of his own theology."[278] This brings the discussion to a further hypothesis that if this verse is purely Mark's formulation, the content must have then been derived from the early traditions. To this proposition, Pesch would reply that the formulation and placement of the content and text in the prologue are taken from the Markan source itself.[279] Lohmeyer has suggested that the content of verses Mk 1:14-15 may have been supplied from an early Christian catechesis.[280] In addition, it is also to be noted that Matthew, all throughout his writing, mostly uses the phrase 'Kingdom of Heaven' which is considered by scholars as synonym for 'Kingdom of God,'[281] though in a couple of instances he does use 'Kingdom of God' (16:28; 19:24; 21:43; 12:28).

On the other hand, it is also of significant importance to sketch out Jesus' understanding of his repeated usage of the 'Kingdom.' Did he mean it to be a political jurisdiction, domain, dynasty, empire or a well-structured government? Had this Kingdom already appeared or was it something that would be materialised in the future? What did Jesus, after all, want to communicate? To some, this term, found scores of times throughout the New Testament, has little significance. Kasper explicitly states that Jesus himself "nowhere tells us in so many words *what* that Kingdom of God is. He only says that it is

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[278] Werner H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark*: *A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 4.

[276] Cf. Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium: Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Teil I und II (Freiburg: Herder, 1976-77). See especially Teil I, page 100.

[280] Cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus: Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1963), 29-30.

[281] Charles Harold Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, revised edition (New York: Scribner, 1961), 21.

near."[282] If this is the case, could it be possible, that Jesus probably presupposed a familiarity in his listeners, since his society, with great expectations was looking forward to the Kingdom? If Jesus is considered to be the bringer of this Kingdom through his life, death and resurrection, then a critical inquiry of the past promises is necessary. This would help in understanding the mind and the language of Jesus, and further, in re-interpreting this motif of the 'Kingdom' for today's society.

2.1.1 Re-investigating Antecedents in the Old Testament

Though this exact expression 'Kingdom of God' does not appear in the literature of the Old Testament, it is absolutely wrong to conclude that this notion is not rooted in the hearts of the Old Testament epoch and is, therefore, alien to them. Kasper, however, like several other Scripture scholars, sees this concept as having its foundation in the Old Testament and hence finds it not fair to consider it as supplied by the later catechetical tradition. Moreover, the idea of the rule of God over creation, over the kingdoms of the world and in a unique and special way, over his chosen and redeemed people, is the very heart and message of the Hebrew Scripture.[283] The creation-narratives present God as a unique creator (*creatio ex nihilo*) and this act of creating the universe out of nothing, points to a unique feature of God's kingship. Graeme Goldsworthy speaks of a 'Garden Kingdom' in Eden, where the kingdom-pattern is established in Eden among "God's people (Adam and Eve), in God's place (the Garden of Eden) and under God's rule (the word of God)." [284]

The Greek phrase frequently used when speaking of the 'Kingdom of God' is '*basileia.*' This Greek word '*basileia*' '*βασιλεία*' appeard ambiguous to Dodd, a New Testament scholar and an influential Protestant theologian, Welsh. According to him, there is no doubt however that "the expression represents an Aramaic phrase well-established in Jewish usage, 'The *malkuth* of Heaven' ('sovereignty,' 'kingship,' kingly rule,' 'reign')

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[282] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 72.

[283] Cf. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 618.

[284] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1994), 51.

and "the expression therefore, 'the *malkuth* of God,' connotes the fact that God reigns as King."[285]

A careful survey of the social and political history of Israel reveals that the power of their kings rested in the power of the gods they worshipped. Accordingly, gods ruled the land bringing fertility to its inhabitants and even battles were waged, besides political grounds, also for the honour and power of their god. The Hebrew concept of the Kingdom or reign of YHWH (Yahweh) might have been influenced by the religious and political contexts of the land which they received. Consequently, YHWH's faithfulness to his promises made to the Hebrews came as a "manifestation of God's power over the other gods rather than as a result of merely God's creative abilities."[286] Later, the grave misfortune experienced by God's chosen people in Egypt, God's timely intervention by breaking the shackles and releasing them from the enemy's grip, and ultimately providing for their needs in the desert, confirm God's extended or universal reign.

During the time of the Prophets, the idea of the Kingship of YHWH witnessed further developments. These prophets anointed and sent by God, brought new and wider insights into the nature and character of YHWH's sovereignty. God was indeed worshipped for his holiness, perfection, righteousness and love. However, the prophets further presented God as a care-taker, watchful guardian and defender of justice and mercy, and at the same time a righteous judge. Although God was an eternal king, a certain sense of insecurity, however, prevailed among his chosen people. The absolute and ultimate reign of God was not yet manifested in the world and hence, this gave rise to a future hope in God's ultimate power. The prophets were anxiously looking to the great "'Day of the Lord,' when God will triumphantly intervene to establish his sovereignty, finally and absolutely."[287]

From the above discussions, it could be deduced that by the time Jesus began his ministry, the idea of the coming of the Kingdom of God was a well-established notion.

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[285] Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 21. For a detailed view see also Helmut Merklein „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes," in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie*. Band II, Traktat Offenbarung, ed. Walter Kern, Hermann Pottmeyer and Max Seckler (Stuttgart: UTB, 2000), 115-116.
[286] David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 767.
[287] George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Vol. III (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 18.

People believed that only the establishment of God's Kingdom and his rule could do away with the rigorous, formidable and inimical power of the Romans. Jesus enters the scene which is politically disputed and in a society, which is eagerly waiting to be liberated.

2.1.2 Kasper and the Triple Character of the Kingdom of God

Mark 1:14 presents the undisputed fact that Jesus announced from the very outset the coming of the Kingdom of God. To characterise this Kingdom Jesus made use of parables, imageries and sayings, though he did not categorically pinpoint what exactly the Kingdom of God is. O'Collins opines, "On his (Jesus') lips 'the kingdom' was practically a way of talking of God as Lord of the world and God's decisive, climactic intervention to liberate sinful and suffering men and women from the grip of evil and give them a new and final age of salvation."[288] Kasper rightly puts it that Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and did not establish an institution.[289] Jesus not only delivered the message of God's Kingdom, but he himself embodied this message. Kasper hence opines, that Jesus' message and actions "reveal the way the Father wills to act towards sinners."[290] With the message of the Kingdom, "Jesus takes up the hope of the Old Testament."[291] To Kasper, this motif and message of the Kingdom of God is the core concept of Christology and he tries to expound this leitmotif focusing on its triple character.

2.1.2.1 Eschatological Character: God will be All in All

Though modern scholars concede that 'Kingdom of God' was the central proclamation of Jesus' good-tidings, all do not understand and interpret it in a similar manner. The issue in contention here concerns the right comprehension and interpretation of this language of kings and kingdoms spoken by a figure that lived years ago. Kasper identifies the biblical hope of the coming of the Kingdom in the history of Israel, which he clearly perceives in the special landmarks, like exodus from Egypt, journey in the wilderness, Babylonian

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[288] O' Collins, *Christology*, 54.

[289] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Kirche – Werk des Heiligen Geistes," in *Krise und Erneuerung der Kirche: Theologische Ortsbestimmungen*, ed. Mattias Lutz-Bachmann und Bruno Schlegelberger (Berlin: Morus, 1989), 34.

[290] Ralph N. McMichael, *Walter Kasper's Response to Modern Atheism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 80.

[291] Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church. Nature, Reality and Mission*, trans. Thomas Hoebel (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 84.

exile etc., where God gradually reveals himself as one who has absolute power. Further, numerous Psalms also sing God's praise acclaiming him as 'Lord' or 'King' (Ps 47:6-9; 91:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; 145:13). Eschatological hope is also preached by the later prophets in the course of Israel's painful events, awakening an expectation of this Kingdom in the future in Israel. It is a hope in the new age of transcendental reality, a hope that in the end God will be all in all.[292] In this context Rahner has a very convincing clarification to offer. He states:

> It is certain from Scripture that God has *not* revealed to man the day of the end… The truth is that the end for us has a character of hiddenness which is essential and proper to it and effects all its elements. This is already implied by the Christian existentials of faith and hope: without this character of hiddenness in the fulfilment yet to come, faith and hope would not be what they are and must be if Christian. And again, if faith and hope are to exist, they demand that the future be essentially concealed.[293]

Karl Barth too substantiates the eschatological dimension of Christianity when he writes, "Christianity that is not wholly, entirely, and absolutely eschatological has wholly, entirely, and absolutely nothing to do with Christ."[294]

Kasper tries to explain the new shape given by Jesus in the New Testament to this eschatological hope of Israel.[295] Jesus embarks on his mission declaring that the eschatological hope is being fulfiled and it is immediate at hand (Mk 1:14-15; Mt 4:17; Lk 10:9, 11) and it is this new twist and shift in the eschatological hope proclaimed by Jesus, that one needs to appropriate. Norman Perrin, an American Biblical Scholar, has tried to identify how the sayings of Jesus concerning the 'Kingdom of God' are hidden for the present and reflected in the tension between present and future.[296] Some of Jesus' sayings indicate that the Kingdom is here and now, while in some others, the coming of the Kingdom is to be looked forward to and prayed for (Mt 6:10; Lk 11:2). Helmut

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[292] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 74-78. Also see Hans Urs von Balthasar, „Umrisse der Eschatologie," in *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verl., 1960), 276-300.

[293] Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. IV, 329.

[294] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E. C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 314; Walter Kasper, "Hope in the Final Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory," *Communio* 12 (Winter, 1985): 369.

[295] Kasper does not intend to present Jesus as a prophet of hope who made promises regarding salvation and liberation, which was soon to be realised. Instead, Kasper is asserting the beginning of the realisation of these prophecies of old in the person of Jesus Christ.

[296] Cf. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 185-201.

Merklein, a German Catholic Theologian maintains, that fundamentally, it is to be understood that the Kingdom that Jesus proclaims is an eschatological future blessing. Or else, he argues, the petition in the Lord's Prayer "Your Kingdom come" (Lk 11:2) has no meaning.[297]

Martin Dibelius, a German Biblical Scholar, in his *Jesus*[298] emphatically points out that the 'Kingdom of God' is the eschatological act of God establishing his rule in the universe. Among the many parables that speak about the growth of the Kingdom of God, Dibelius makes a special reference to Mk 4:26, the parable of the sower, to stress this eschatological dimension of the Kingdom, a parable that admonishes its readers to wait.[299] Knowing the implication of his parable, Jesus asked to pray for the coming of the Kingdom.[300] How is this term 'future' to be qualified since there is even consensus that Jesus assumed a quick coming of this kingdom? One of the interpretations that Kasper proposes is that the Kingdom may be accepted here and now, but that its blessings will be enjoyed only in the end and only by those who have fulfiled the necessary conditions.

Dodd argues that the saying "The Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:28; Lk 11:20) clearly depicts the Kingdom as a present reality, a present experience. Thus for Jesus, the presence of the Kingdom of God means that the sovereign power of God has come into effective operation and this must be recognised and realised.[301] Dodd seems to be partially right because a similar idea is echoed when Jesus answers John the Baptist's question on Jesus through John's disciples: "Are you the coming one or are we to wait for another?" (Mt 11:3; Lk 7:20). Kasper identifies in Jesus' reply to John's disciples the promised time by the Prophets, which is now fulfiled, and that Jesus' disciples are indeed fortunate since they are within the Kingdom of God.

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[297] Cf. Merklein, „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes," 121.

[298] Cf. Martin Dibelius, *Jesus*, 4. Aufl. mit einem Nachtrag von Werner Georg Kümmel (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1966).

[299] Cf. Dibelius, *Jesus*, 54. Here Dibelius clarifies some subtle notions this parable signifies. The sower probably cannot do much after sowing except wait for the fruits which the earth is supposed to produce. Thus, Dibelius highlights that the stress laid in this parable is clearly on waiting rather than sowing.

[300] Cf. Dibelius, *Jesus*, 54; Also see George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (London: SPCK, 1966), 7.

[301] Cf. Dodd, *The Parable of the Kingdom*, 28-29. It is Dodd who popularised this Christian theory of Realised Eschatology which quickly gained ground.

Dibelius has contended that "the tension between the future and the present is the tension between the Kingdom in complete fulfilment and the Kingdom in process of breaking in upon the present order. Thus the signs of the Kingdom are present, though not the Kingdom itself."[302] Modifying the work of Dodd on Parables, Jeremias argues for both; the present and the future notion in the parables of Jesus concerning the Kingdom. Accordingly, he even suggests a modification of Dodd's popular 'realised eschatology' and re-names it as 'eschatology that is in a process of realisation.'[303]

A harmonious blend of the two streams of thoughts – one, that the Kingdom of God is a future realisation and the other, as being already present, seems to be almost impossible. Furthermore, there is also a growing consensus in the New Testament scholarship that the Kingdom of God is in some sense both present and future. Whatever may be the progress achieved as a result of serious theologising, the question of the "role of apocalyptic concepts in our Lord's teaching, and the relationship between the present and the future aspects of the Kingdom continue to be vigourously debated."[304]

It is here that the vast theological and philosophical knowledge of Kasper comes into play. He has done well in attempting to strike a balance between these two opposing interpretations. He prefers to account time and eternity from the biblical point of view and not philosophically. The concept of time has been indeed problematical for philosophers. There is even a slight controversy among biblical scholars as to precisely how 'time' is employed in the divine scheme of things. Kasper regards time not only as purely quantitative but also qualitative.[305] Time is measured from content and is therefore not just the duration and the interval between two events. That there is a season for everything and there is time for every matter under heaven is made categorically explicit in Ecclesiastes.[306] Only when biblical time is understood as happening and not the interval between happenings, does Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God become intelligible and distinct.

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[302] Dibelius, *Jesus*, 73-84; Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 7.

[303] This is a change from *realisierter Eschatologie* to *sich realisierenden Eschatologie*. See also Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1954), 159.

[304] Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 3.

[305] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 77.

[306] Cf. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. The writer gives a long list of opposites to indicate that there is time for everything. Kasper maintains that when time is viewed in the context of its content, Jesus' message could be understood in the right sense and with precise meaning.

In the background of this understanding of time Kasper highlights that it is time now for the coming of the Kingdom of God. He even maintains that Jesus links the coming of the Kingdom of God with his own coming.[307] What is special of the message of Jesus is "not only its content but also the fact that he linked his 'cause,' namely, the kingdom of God, indissolubly with his own person."[308] This coming is an event, a happening that modifies the present and faces men with a choice. Kasper makes the present and the future of the Kingdom clear. He claims that the Kingdom is the power that controls the future but it is also active and present since it forces a choice between the here and now and, for or against it. Albert Schweitzer has also underlined the eschatological character of the Kingdom of God.[309] However, Sobrino maintains, "At the start Jesus believed that the kingdom would come during his own life time (see Mt 10:23); later he thought that its coming would be hastened by his own death (see Mt 26:24). It was the later Christian community, disappointed by the failure of the kingdom to arrive, that shifted the coming of the kingdom to the end of time (see Mk 13:32)."[310] Such an apocalyptic view of the Kingdom gained more adherents and such a thought-pattern was termed as "consistent eschatology."[311]

These interpretations stand in contrast to the conceptions about the Kingdom envisaged by Kasper, who understands it not just as an imagination, but as feelings of eschatological hope and comfort, developed in a situation of distress, bitterness, and anxiety of life. In other words, these hopes finally awaken a certainty that God will reveal himself as the absolute Lord of the entire world.[312] Such an eschatological hope, regenerating and reviving belief and hope in salvation, liberation, and redemption, Kasper maintains, is no longer in the distant unattainable future, but is here and now; immediate and at hand.

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[307] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 237-238.

[308] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 168. In the preaching and the works of Jesus, Kasper clearly sees God's cause working effectively, and this condescending action of God which began in the Old Testament, now reaches its climax in Jesus.

[309] See *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung*, Band II (Munich: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1966), 402-50; ET: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

[310] Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach* (London: SCM, 1978), 62.

[311] For a detailed explanation of this concept visit the article on Albert Schweitzer's Consistent Eschatology: http://jtpwc.blogspot.com/2008/10/albert-schweitzers-consistent.html (accessed June 05, 2011).

[312] Cf. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. IV, 323-346. This is the thirteenth chapter dealing with "The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions."

Kasper is aware of the tension this eschatological interpretation has created when he explicitly refers to the findings of Oscar Cullmann, a Protestant Theologian, known for his 'Already/Not Yet Eschatology'[313] and of Werner G. Kümmel, a German New Testament Scholar.[314] Kasper finally asserts that Jesus' message, generating an eschatological promise, nevertheless, creates hope which is still unfulfiled, and this hope will not be fulfiled until God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15:28).

Rudolf Bultmann, proponent of existential eschatology, holds that the preaching of Jesus is eschatological because it confronts people here and now with the ultimate reality and meaning of their lives.[315] Rudolf Schnackenburg, a German Catholic New Testament Scholar, who reviewed the motif of the Kingdom of God in his study, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich: Eine biblische-theologische Studie,*[316] tried to show that the New Testament Kingdom of God is a new eschatological reality, awaiting God's future Kingdom.

It can be seen clearly that Kasper rejects the psychological view which believes that Jesus saw the present and the future as interwoven, entwined. The elucidation offered by traditional criticism is equally untenable to Kasper. Instead, he partly endorses the attempt of A. Ritschl, who in tune with Kant's doctrine of the highest good presents the Kingdom of God "as the common goal of all human moral strivings."[317] However, Ritschl offered a purely social and ethical interpretation when he observed that the Kingdom of God was "the moral organization of humanity through action inspired by love,"[318] a moral task to be carried out by the human race. Finally, Ritschl believed that the goal of God, Jesus and humanity, are "all one in the Kingdom of God."[319] Kasper is not fully convinced about this interpretation which he observes as an exposition ignoring the time perspective and the historical character, both essential elements of the Kingdom of God.

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[313] See Oscar Cullmann, *Heil als Geschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965); ET: *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

[314] Cf. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 28-29. See also Werner George Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1969).

[315] See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus* (Munich: Siebenstern, 1967); idem, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

[316]This work was first published by Herder in Freiburg in 1959; trans. *God's Rule and Kingdom* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1963

[317] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 76.

[318] Dennis C. Duling, "The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus," *Word and World* 2, no. 2 (1982): 120. Cf. also Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1900), 9.

[319] David L. Müller, "Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89): Prophet of a New Christianity?" *Review and Expositor* 67, no. 3 (1970): 357.

The Kingdom of God is for Kasper not the supra-temporal goal of ethical endeavour, but it is something very concrete and tangible, something that takes place here and now.

2.1.2.2 Theological Character: The Day and Lordship of Yahweh

Sketching out the glaring differences that portray the Kingship of Yahweh in the Old Testament and the Fatherhood of God in the New Testament is Kasper's main concern. Many scholars have attempted to determine the roots of Israel's hope of liberation, which were enveloped in puzzling oracles of the prophets, and onto which Jesus appears to have grafted his teachings. Sigmund Mowinckel, one of the most significant scholars in Psalms, in his major monograph on the Old Testament roots of Messianism, *He That Cometh* states: "The fundamental idea in the future hope (of Israel) is always the kingly rule of Yahweh, his victorious advent as king and his reckoning with his enemies. Yahweh's victory is followed by the manifestation of his kingship. He appears as king and takes possession of his realm."[320]

The 'Day of Yahweh' that Judaism awaited and expected was all set on an eschatological hope that a day will dawn, on which the absolute Godhead of Yahweh would be manifested, asserted and proclaimed. The articulation 'Godhead,' suggests Kasper, is brought to expression in the perfect grandeur and high eminence in the first commandment of the Decalogue: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."[321]

The 'Lordship of Yahweh' has its roots indeed in the creation account. *Creatio ex nihilo* confirms that the entire universe comes from God and that he is both the source and its Creator. As mentioned earlier, God's election of Israel and his constant guidance and protection, developed in the Israelites certain reverence to Yahweh as they experienced his absolute power. Kasper refers time and again to the prophetic teachings which pre-suppose the idea of this kingship of Yahweh, both when they predict disasters and as well as when they promise salvation. These prophetic visions and prophecies include the glad tidings of the dawn of God's kingly reign, its orientation towards eschatological

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[320] Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1956), 143. See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom*, second enlarged edition (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 30.

[321] Cf. Ex 20:2-3.

salvation, a complete revamp of the old and the beginning of a new era and finally, the universal scope that does not exclude the Gentiles.[322]

Kasper notices a glaring difference that is quite conspicuous in the ideologies between the Jewish comprehension about this Kingdom and that of Jesus. The former asserted a purely transcendent God, Lawgiver and Judge, in contrast to the latter who preached an entirely down-to-earth God and Creator, a Father who loves and forgives.[323] This is made clear as Jesus addresses God his Father, as '*abba* father,' as a loving and forgiving Father. Kasper finds here a beautiful synthesis, a perfect blend, as he combines the two sides: the dominative and authoritarian aspects of fatherhood of the ancient world, with the familiar, the intimate and the affectionate fatherhood of God that Jesus preached. Kasper highlights God's closeness and intimacy with his creation in the preaching of Jesus which goes far beyond the Old Testament understanding of God. Kasper maintains:

> Jesus' God is the God who is near, who cares for the grass of the field (Mt 6.30) and feeds the sparrows (Mt 10.31)… God's Lordship consists in the sovereignty of his love… His coming and his nearness mean the coming of the Kingdom in love… The term 'Father' crystallized in a special way Jesus' view of God's kingdom as God's rule in love.[324]

Kasper maintains that in Jesus, "God has definitively entered the time and space of this world"[325] and in Jesus and his coming the expectations of the prophets also have been fulfiled. To Kasper, Jesus' filial relationship with his Father is of prime importance in order to understand this sovereignty of love. The central message of the preaching of Jesus is the message of God as Father.[326] He constantly compares the two parallel ideologies of God as Father. Jesus' God is a God, who loves and cares (Mt 6:30; 10:31), in contrast with the ideas that Israel had of the same God as Father; not the biological one (of procreation) but the theological one (of election). This designation of God as Father comes to full fruition in the message of the prophets who constantly blame Israel for not

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[322] Cf. Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom*, 13, 38.

[323] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Religion und die Zukunft des Menschen," *IkaZ* 36 (2007): 308.

[324] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 79.

[325] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 169.

[326] Cf. Walter Kasper, *Barmherzigkeit: Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüssel christlichen Lebens* (Wien: Herder, 2012), 73.

giving God the honour due to him, the honour a son should give to his father (Mal 1:6; cf. Deut 32:5-6; Jer 3:19-20).[327]

Joachim Jeremias maintains that the use of 'my Father' is something that is unusual and uncommon especially in ancient Palestinian Judaism literature. Jesus' way of addressing God as 'my Father' is something new, and this address has a very 'intimate and familiar tone,'[328] a sign of affectionate intimacy with his Father, a sign that Jesus knew his Father personally. Jesus' relationship with the Father is "unique and untransferable" and "he is the Son in a unique sense."[329] It is therefore, practically impossible to ignore or fail to realise that "it was a characteristic of Jesus' approach to God in prayer that he addressed God as '*abba*' and that the earliest Christians retained an awareness of this fact in their own use of '*abba*.'"[330]

In the literary style of the Old Testament, God is either addressed as 'I praise you' followed by 'Yahweh' (Is 12:1) or 'my Lord and my God' (Ps 86:12), or only with 'my God' or 'God of my Fathers' (Sir 51:1) and this has no parallel with Jesus' use "I thank you Father" (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21).[331] Statistical studies in the New Testament reveal that the word 'Father' is found not less than 170 times.[332] Here, a contrast is made by Kasper in the use and address of God as Father – Judaism describes God as Father but Jesus addresses God as his Father. This habit of addressing God as '*abba*' distinguished Jesus in some degree from his contemporaries.[333]

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[327] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, "The Lord's Prayer in Modern Research," *The Expository Times* 71, no. 5 (1960): 141-146.

[328] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1971), 67.

[329] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 105. Because of this unique sonship of Jesus we all have received the Spirit of adoption, which makes us children of God, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

[330] James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of Incarnation* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 26.

[331] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Abba: Studie zur Neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966), 58-59.

[332] Cf. Merklein, „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes," 126; Jeremias, *Abba*, 15-16.

[333] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 235. Here Kasper argues that Jesus polemised against the Jewish legality, broke the Sabbath law, broke the purificatory rites, and addressed God as '*Abba*,' 'Father' in a very annoying way, which was non-enforceable to the Jews and this fact, to Kasper, can be historically hardly controversial. See also Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayer of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 22-24.

Since '*abba*' is normally used in everyday life and talk, especially by a child to address its father, it would have seemed "disrespectful, indeed unthinkable, to the sensibilities of Jesus' contemporaries to address God with this familiar word."[334] But Jesus did it since he was manifesting his nearness, proximity and his intimacy with God; a feeling of confidence and of being accepted. Kasper brings to light Jesus' new understanding of God, one who is close to men in love, and that to be a child, is itself the mark of the Kingdom of God. Jesus did not proclaim a new God but rather revealed the God of Israel in a new way. He places punishment-deserving Israel in a new relationship with God, a relationship that also entitles them to call God 'Father.'[335] God is not just a creator but also a Father and hence, human beings are not just creatures but also his children. Kasper confirms that "when God begins his reign as Father, it is the new creation. The old has passed away; all things are made new in the blaze of his love, all things are possible."[336] Such a harmonious atmosphere, a new reign, a new creation, the old passing away and the new coming into existence, is the perfect sign of the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

In other words, Jesus is going to overthrow the power of Satan and he will conquer sickness, sin and even death. This is how the final victory is going to be signalled: a "victory over the powers that have oppressed and kept humankind captive 'in the shadow of death,'"[337] a time of realisation of all the prophecies of the Old Testament and a time when the hopes of the just will be fulfiled (Mt 13:17; Lk 10:24). Jesus declares that a new age has dawned on humankind, a new era (Mt 11:13; Lk 7:28; 16:16). Kasper is convinced that this new age of God's Kingdom is purely God's doing and it is not man-made, it has been gifted to humanity (Mt 21:43; Lk 12:32).

The crucial question here, as Jesus' disciples also astoundingly asked, is "Then who can be saved?" (Mt 19:25) or, as someone else asked Jesus, "Lord, will only a few be saved?" (Lk 13:23). What could be the requirements or demands of this Kingdom? Kasper makes it clear that God's Kingdom is a Kingdom and rule of love and therefore, there is no place for hatred and envy. God's lordship is seen in his forgiveness and love, a love that is

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[334] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 67.

[335] Cf. Merklein, „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes," 126; Jeremias, *Abba*, 127.

[336] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 81. Also cf. Mt 19:26; Mk 10:27; 14:36; Lk 18:27.

[337] Roch A. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, revised and updated edition (New York, Alba House: St. Paul's Publication, 2009), 106.

creative, a love that even restores life, which Kasper names – parental love and goodness.[338] Repentance and faith are the only requirements that will enable one to inherit this kingdom of love (Mk 1:15). Kasper intelligibly distinguishes an act of repentance (*metanoia*) from an ascetic rigorism; an act of faith from the surrender of the intellect, and according to him these are not to be interchanged. Repentance is a profound change of heart, a rediscovery of God, an unreserved self-abandonment to his mercy, and a beginning of new relationship.

Speaking on the God-question today, where God is seen as a problem, Kasper argues that "because God is the question in all questions, he himself can be placed in question."[339] Questioning the Christian God and finding him no longer a viable source of any absolute moral principles, Nietzsche, in his classical statement 'God is Dead' declared the death of God. This widely cited statement by the German Philosopher appeared first in "The Gay Science" (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*) and later found an extensive treatment in his classic "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (*Also sprach Zarathustra*). This death of God that Nietzsche believed, not only rejected a belief of cosmic and physical order, but also rejected absolute values and universal moral laws, gradually moving towards nihilism. As a consequence of such reasoning and in the search for a new foundation for values, since God was no longer the goal of human conduct, Nietzsche turned to the aesthetic dimension of human nature as the most promising alternative to religion.[340]

For Kasper, Jesus' God is a God of history, ever creative, a God who carries forward what he has begun. God is beyond time and space and therefore, not bound by laws and time. Further argued, he cannot be contained but in him is everything contained. In the sovereignty of God's love consists his divinity and hence, Kasper believes that, "He (God) can give himself without losing himself. He is himself precisely when he enters into that which is other than himself. It is by surrendering himself that he shows his

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[338] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 81.

[339] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 6.

[340] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 7-12, 16-46. For an extensive reading on Nietzsche's ideas on 'Death of God' and Nihilism see Fredrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With Prelude of Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974); idem; "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

divinity. Concealment is therefore the way in which God's glory is revealed in the world."[341]

As mentioned earlier, when Jesus speaks about God and the Kingdom of God, he is proclaiming a God who is living, not only as one who is able to act concretely but one who is in fact now working and acting in the present world history. Ratzinger would say, Jesus is telling us "God exists" and "God is really God," which means that God "holds in his hands the threads of the world."[342] The "Cause of Jesus,"[343] the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God, says Kasper, could only be effectively proclaimed when one is convinced that Jesus on the cross was not a failure. God was faithful to Jesus and Jesus to God. As the risen Lord Jesus now lives in this Kingdom of God, which through his death and resurrection has reached its fulfilment.[344] Jesus' message is very simple and God-centred. The hour for God to act has come and he is now going to show that he is the Lord of history and a living God. The call by Jesus that 'the time is fulfiled' signifies that the reality is going to take a new form, a new design that is totally dependent on God's generous love and his making. With the coming of this Kingdom of God, Kasper opines, that the entire cosmos enters a new sphere of salvation.

2.1.2.3 Soteriological Character: Repentance, Faith and Salvation

Kasper opens his reflection on the Kingdom motif by asserting that Jesus proclaimed not himself but the Kingdom of God to come.[345] He writes:

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[341] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 83. The Church today professes its faith in the one God, as the almighty and the creator, who was revealed and addressed by Jesus as his Father and also our Father. This profession of the Church has become the nucleus of the New Testament manifesto. However, questions concerning this God and Father of Jesus Christ and especially as regards his relationship with the creation and the world today, records Kasper, has remained mysterious for many even now. For further reading also refer, Walter Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi*, Gesammelte Schriften, Band IV, ed. George Augustine und Klaus Krämer (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 229.

[342] Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 2007), 55-56.

[343] For a comprehensive understanding of 'cause of Jesus,' see Walter Kasper, „Die Sache Jesu. Recht und Grenzen eines Interpretationsversuches," *Herder-Korrespondenz* 26 (1972): 185-189; idem, „Der Glaube an die Auferstehung Jesu vor dem Forum historischer Kritik," *ThQ* 153 (1973): 231-235; idem, „Einmaligkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi," *Theologie der Gegenwart* 17 (1974): 1-11; J. Nolte, „Die Sache Jesu und die Zukunft der Kirche. Gedanken zur Stellung von Christologie und Ekklesiologie," in *Jesus von Nazareth*, ed. Franz Joseph Schierse (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verl., 1972), 214-233;

[344] Cf. Kasper, „Aufgabe der Christologie heute," 136.

[345] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 233.

> He (Jesus) proclaimed God and his kingdom. He did not teach any Christology, with the result that we can at the most only look for an indirect or implicit Christology of Jesus… Unlike the prophets, who simply proclaimed the kingdom of God, Jesus also brought it… Jesus in fact included his person in his cause… The kingdom of God already came in Jesus' activity and appearance.[346]

As mentioned earlier, Mk 1:15 is the classical text that signals the unveiling of the Kingdom of God. This climax of the prologue of Mark provides preview to readers and also prefigures the scenario of the probable would-be happenings in the life of Jesus. Hence, the assertion of the scholars, that the proclamation of the Kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teaching and "major part of Jesus' message,"[347] is not to be downplayed. This solemn inaugural announcement of Jesus, when closely analysed, has three chief elements namely, the time that is fulfiled (immediacy), the Kingdom of God is at hand (proximity),and repent and believe (responsivity).

The eschatological preachers of old, essentially and frequently, proclaimed the imminence of God's judgement and John the Baptist was one among them. When this leitmotif is analysed in the teachings of John the Baptist and in those of Jesus, Kasper observes an obvious and distinct contrast. John the Baptist preached the coming of the Kingdom of God vigorously and vehemently, apparently frightening his listeners. The words he used like "You brood of vipers," "Now the axe is lying at the root of the trees," and "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Lk 3:1-18; Mt 3:1-12; Jn 1:19-28), literally induced dread and panic in his listeners. Such fearful and dreadful announcements not only scared them but left them often speechless. Jesus instead, saw the coming of the Kingdom from an entirely different perspective. His approach to the people was genuine and through his words and deeds he offered them salvation and hence, his message no longer generated fear. On the contrary, deep joy bubbled in the hearts of his hearers and this meant to them 'good news' (*evangelion*)[348] (Mk 1:14; 14:9; Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Lk 1:16).

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[346] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 48-49.

[347] Cf. Dodd, *The Parable of the Kingdom*, 21-59; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. II. Mentor, Message, and Miracles (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 237f; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I (London: SCM Press, 1971), 4f; Johanness Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, ed. Leander E. Keck, trans. Richard Hiers and D. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 47.

[348] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 83.

However, Jeremias maintains that Jesus' message not only proclaims salvation but also warns them of disasters if they do not repent and open their eyes to the reality of God's presence.[349] Kasper defends his position by maintaing that though Jesus, like John preached repentance, Jesus dared a positive and realistic move when he proclaimed salvation through the coming of the Kingdom of God. Repentance for Jesus is no longer related merely to God's sovereignty and judgement, but is rather an acceptance of God's act of an eschatological election.[350]

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, in his reflections on the life of Jesus holds this theme 'Kingdom of God' in high esteem. However, he expounds and elucidates it slightly differently than Kasper by going back to the understanding of this motif in the history of the Church. According to him, Kingdom of God has three dimensions: Christological – agreeing here with Origen's concept of *autobasileia*, the Kingdom in the person of Jesus; Mystical – 'Kingdom of God' is "not to be found on any map" but rather "located in man's inner being" and "it grows and radiates outward from that inner space," and finally Ecclesiastical – "Kingdom of God and the Church are related in different ways and brought into more or less close proximity."[351]

Further Pope Benedict clearly explains how evangelists Mark (1:14-15) and Mathew (4:23; 9:25) designate Jesus' preaching as *evangelion*, as 'good news.' This attractive word for him "falls far short of the order of magnitude of what is actually meant by the word *evangelion*." Further, he explains that, "Roman emperors, who understood themselves as lords, saviours and redeemers of the world" issued messages (*evangelium*) regardless of whether the content was cheerful or unpleasant, meant to "change the world for the better." However, when Evangelists use this word, it means that "the Gospel, is not just informative speech, but performative speech - not just the imparting of information but action, efficacious power that enters into the world to save and transform."[352] Hence when Mark starts with "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," he means that it is not the emperors who save the world but God.

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[349]Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, Kurzausgabe, 11. Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 108.

[350] Cf. Merklein, „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes," 117-118.

[351] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 49-50. Ratzinger has deduced these three dimensions from the teachings and interpretation of this key-expression 'Kingdom of God' by the Church Fathers.

[352] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 46-47.

The ‘good news’ is a tiding of grace and an announcement of salvation. Kasper understands the Kingdom of God and its coming not only as an important event for Jesus but also consider it as the gist of the entire notion of salvation. He formulates this accurately as he writes:

> It is the rule of God himself, the manifestation of his divinity, the establishment of his law and justice and at the same time the quintessence of man’s deepest expectation of salvation… God is Lord whenever he is believed in as Lord and obeyed as Lord…The coming of the kingdom of God means that God makes himself valid in man’s recognition in faith.[353]

As mentioned earlier, Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom not just in words but it is also confirmed by his deeds.[354] Kasper asserts the coming of the Kingdom of God in the miraculous actions of Jesus which bear witness to God’s concern towards the wholeness of man’s spiritual relationship.[355] Hence, “God is insofar as he acts, insofar as he alters reality; and we must view the *actions* of Jesus in that light.”[356] This coming of the Kingdom would mark a new beginning in which old promises are fulfiled, sufferings alleviated, and tears wiped away (Lk 7:22-23; Mt 11:5-6). As against John’s warning Jesus declares people as blessed, here and now. Hence Jesus, through the Beatitudes, proclaims that God will manifest a new and indeed an eschatological final act of election and salvation on Israel.[357] In Kasper’s understanding, these beatitudes are not just blunt imaginations of Jesus. Jesus definitely uses Greek and Jewish wisdom literature but he reverses the entire order and shifts the accent. Hence, Jesus’ blessed are those who are poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers, the despised and all those who are persecuted for the cause of truth.

Kasper presents the God of Jesus Christ as universal and the Kingdom of God as a universal offer of salvation. That said, Jesus is neither interested in any class division nor

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[353] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 46-47.

[354] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Offenbarung und Geheimnis: Vom christlichen Gottesverständnis,“ in *Sein als Offenbarung in Christentum und Hinduismus*, ed. Andreas Bsteh (Mödling: St. Gabriel, 1984), 223. Here Kasper explains the close relationship between God’s words and deeds.

[355] See Reginald H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles*, sixth edition (London: SCM Press, 1974); Franz Mußner, *Die Wunder Jesu: Eine Hinführung* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1967); Rudolf Pesch, *Jesu ureigene Taten? Ein Beitrag zur Wunderfrage*, *QD* 52 (Freiburg: Herder, 1970).

[356] Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 46.

[357] Cf. Merklein, „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes,“ 120.

does he make poverty a hallmark of the Kingdom of God. The only underlying principle here is that the poor are those who do not expect anything from the world but totally trust in God and expect everything from him. Poor according to Kasper are not only those who are economically needy and socially impoverished, but also the broken-hearted and dejected and all those who stand before God as unfortunate.[358] Poor are those who "look towards God, and cast themselves upon God. They have been driven up against the limits of the world and its possibilities."[359] Jesus fixes his eyes on especially on those who toil, struggle and are heavy-laden and his fundamental option for such a company naturally earns him the title – "friend of tax-collectors and sinners (Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34)."[360]

The coming of the Kingdom of God offers salvation which Kasper identifies with life - life in abundance (Mk 9:43, 45; 10:17; Lk 18:18; Jn 6:47; 10:10). He further maintains that, this reality of salvation as forgiveness and restoration of life by God, is substantiated by Jesus through the parables that he narrated (Lk 7:41-43; Mt 18:23-35; Lk 15) using images and objects of everyday use. Besides parables, miracles and forgiveness of sins are primary signs of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. In the words of Sobrnio, "they are signs of liberation and only in that context can they help to shed light on the person of Jesus."[361] Thus Kasper argues that wholeness and salvation are only possible when man is set free, and for him, "The kingdom and the rule of God mean that God makes his cause man's cause, and man's cause his own."[362]

The miracles that Jesus worked were signs and acts of power, that clearly demonstrating the breaking of the power of evil and the nearness of the Kingdom, special signs indicating liberation.[363] They were signs leading to faith and only in faith, according to Kasper, one could recognise and accept these as signs of God's sovereign rule, signs that the whole of mankind is brought to salvation and wholeness.[364] Hence for Kasper, both parables as well as miracles form one single entity or are two functions representing one

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[358] Cf. Kasper, *Barmherzigkeit*, 72. Kasper, in this book also highlights elaborately the compassion of God the Father, especially seen in the parables of Jesus. For more on this read further especially pages 74-76.

[359] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 85, also cf. Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (London: Harper and Row, 1960), 100.

[360] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 85.

[361] Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, 48.

[362] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 46.

[363] Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, „Zur Theologie des Rechtes," *ZEE* 7 (1963): 29.

[364] Cf. Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 48.

reality. The parables of Jesus are therefore, not only an indication of the unseen future but rather, they are the actual part of the events of the Kingdom in which the future reality is already hidden.[365] Jesus was convinced that the Kingdom is revealed and realised in his own preaching and healing ministry.

Kasper clearly states that the Kingdom of God is nothing but total emancipation, salvation, and joy in God which expresses itself in the joy within oneself and with one's neighbour. Such emancipation, believes Kasper, brings inner freedom and is expressed in love and he further writes:

> The age of the coming Kingdom of God is the age of love, which requires us to accept each other unconditionally… The salvation of the Kingdom of God means the coming of power in and through human beings of the self-communicating love of God. Love reveals itself as the meaning of life. The world and man find fulfilment only in love.[366]

What exactly is this salvation that Jesus promises with the coming of the Kingdom of God? At the very outset, it is the message of joy, of forgiveness of sins and of unreserved acceptance of the reality by God through his infinite love. Perfect love, says Kasper, is seen in the dismantling of prejudices and social barriers, in the new unrestricted communications, in brotherly warmth and in the sharing of sadness and joy. Kasper also makes a reference to the dismantling of prejudices and social barriers as the signs of the surpassing love of God, which in turn brings communion and unity among men. Jesus himself is the Kingdom of God; justice and the love of God in person; he is the new beginning; the new creation.[367]

All of what has been discussed above may be summed up as follows: Salvation or the coming of the Kingdom of God finally means, the overcoming of destructive forces that are hostile to creation, the emerging of a new creation, the reign of the love of God, a life in fullness and fulfilment in life and love. Any attempts by humans to bring to naught the love of God causes loneliness and isolation, meaninglessness and emptiness in their life.

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[365] Cf. also Merklein, „Jesus, Künder des Reiches Gottes," 124-125. The issue on miracles of Jesus is dealt extensively under separate heading immediately after this section and hence is not elaborately discussed here.

[366] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 86. For Kasper, unlike others, the message of the Kingdom of God is a message of salvation and this message of the saving love of God amounts also to inner joy.

[367] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 214.

The coming of the Kingdom of God promises that everything is done in the world out of love; love being the guiding and governing factor. Love is the answer to the search for a just and human world and the solution to the riddles of history. It is the wholeness of man and the world. Finally, Kasper makes it clear, that to attain this liberation and this life that God offers, there is a need for conversion and a radical change in one's personal life.

2.1.3 The Kingdom of God: Post-Conciliar Difficulties

From the above considerations it follows that the Kingdom of God was for Jesus a top priority. Kasper summarises in three broad categories the different affirmations of the Kingdom foreshadowed in the Scriptures: through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the promise of the Kingdom has been fulfiled; through his resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, humans now share in the Kingdom; and finally the Kingdom will be fully actualised when Jesus comes again as the Lord of the Universe. The reality of the Kingdom and its different interpretations therefore fall in these three categories: past – in and through the ministry of Jesus; present – through the first fruits of the Spirit; and future – in consummation.[368] This is a Kingdom that appears in time but is not bound by time since it intersects human existence at all points: past, present and future.

That said, it is now important to have a brief look at the advanced discussions in the recent past on the Kingdom of God, so as to understand the present interpretation and the direction in which the Kingdom is moving. The Kingdom is "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph 5:5) and the world awaits "his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim 4:1). This reaches a perfect climax in Karl Barth's assertion "Jesus Christ is Himself the established kingdom of God."[369] The Second Vatican Council has addressed the relations between the Roman Catholic Church, the Kingdom of God and the modern world. It is interesting to note the later developments and the interrelation between them in the aftermath of this great ecumenical Council.

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[368] Cf. Donald G. Dawe, *Jesus: The Death and Resurrection of God* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 53.

[369] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics. The Doctrine of God*, Vol. II, Part 2, trans. G. W. Bromiley et.al. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1957), 177.

2.1.3.1 The Kingdom of God and Liberation Theology

Costantino Ziccardi, in his study on the Kingdom of God, clearly identifies how Liberation Theology falsely understands the Kingdom as the goal, which God wills for the world that he created. According to this,

> The kingdom of God is located in time and space, economics and politics, society and culture. The final kingdom is anticipated in history to varying degrees in every act of liberation… Jesus' role with regards to it is to have preached and incarnated the kingdom by his solidarity with the marginalized and his advocacy on behalf of the poor and the oppressed… the resurrection continues to foster the realisation of the kingdom insofar as it makes possible the faith required of men and women for commitment to liberation.[370]

Although such reflections brought benefits in theological understanding and developments, it did not spare the Church from certain uneasiness. The Church always understood the liberation program of Jesus as primarily, liberation from the slavery of sin. In the course of time, there appeared a wave in theology which identified this liberation program of Jesus as liberation of humanity from servitude. This false emphasis generated danger in the Church as it pushed the aspect of liberation of sin to the second place. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was quick to perceive this ambiguous problem and the risk of deviations that probably could damage the Christian faith and living. In its instructions, the Congregation unhesitatingly curbed certain negative tendencies of Liberation Theology, like:[371]

a) The tendency to speak of the Kingdom of God as though it were a secular project of political liberation realisable in history (Chapter IX, no. 3; Chapter X, nos. 6, 7; Chapter XI, no. 17). This identification is in opposition to the faith of the Church, as has been reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council (LG 9-17).

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[370] Costantino Antonio Ziccardi, *The Relationship of Jesus and the Kingdom of God according to Luke-Acts*, (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2008), 10-11.

[371] What follows next is an excerpt from the Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" issued on August 6, 1984 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. For the complete text of the instructions and for more and correct understanding of the Kingdom of God and the Church, visit: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html (accessed January 20, 2013).

b) The tendency to see Jesus as one revealing God and God's Kingdom, primarily through his struggles on behalf of the marginalised and against the powerful (Chapter X, nos. 9, 10).

Pope St. John Paul II, in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*[372] expressed signs of disapproval with regard to such tendencies of Liberation Theology that made the Kingdom completely secularised. He also provided reasons why the Kingdom must and should not be separated from Christ whose mission was to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God (Lk 4:43). This good news included Jesus himself, since Jesus applied to himself the words of Isaiah in Nazareth (Lk 4:14-21). Consequently, "Above all… the kingdom is made manifest in the very person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who came 'to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mk 10:45)" (RM 18; also LG 5). In his Encyclical the Pope emphasised the inseparable relationship between Jesus and the Kingdom of God. He maintains:

a) Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God and he himself reveals who this God is. Hence, the Kingdom cannot be separated from Jesus because it is the kingdom of him, who is Jesus' Father in a unique way (RM 13).
b) While the Kingdom of God is "the realisation of God's plan of salvation in its fullness," God "has definitely inaugurated the Kingdom" in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships and it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. The nature of the Kingdom therefore is one of communion of all human beings; with one another and with God (RM 15, 16).
c) After resurrection, the disciples preached the Kingdom by proclaiming Jesus or they preached the Kingdom and Jesus together (Acts 8:12; 28:31). "Now, as then, there is a need to unite the proclamation of the kingdom of God (the content of Jesus' own *kerygma*) and the proclamation of the Christ-event (the *kerygma* of the apostles). These proclamations are complementary; each throws light on the other" (RM 16).

[372] Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II published on December 7, 1990, dedicated to the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate.

2.1.3.2 The Kingdom of God, *Ecclesia* and Missiology

This theme has also been widely discussed in contemporary Missiology. Jacques Dupuis devotes the thirteenth chapter of his book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* to the universality of the reign of God in which he elaborates the understanding of the Kingdom of God in relation to other religions. His arguments seem to subscribe to regnocentrism rather than Christocentrism. This is clear when he quotes, "While the believers of other religious faiths perceive God's call through their own traditions and respond to it in the sincere practise of these traditions, they become in all truth – even without being formally conscious of it – active members of the kingdom."[373] In certain sense Rudolph Schnackenburg also seems to follow a similar line of thought when he mentions, "'Kingdom of God' is therefore a more comprehensive term than 'Church'… But Christ's rule extends beyond the Church… and one day the Church will have completed her earthly task and will be absorbed in the eschatological Kingdom of Christ and of God."[374] This points out to one basic truth, that the Church on earth is as if she were in exile but is already experiencing those things which are above, "where the life of the church is hidden with Christ in God until she appears in glory with her spouse" (LG 6). The Church on earth and the Church "enriched with heavenly things" are not two realities but "one interlocked reality" (LG 8). The mission of the Church is however entrusted not only to the hierarchy but also to the laity, who "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God."[375]

Considering the Church as the Kingdom of God is another erroneous notion which needs to be rectified. The Church is an eschatological reality and is still God's pilgrim people, growing and building itself up, striving to reach its full measure of the plenitude of Christ in the Spirit and Body of Christ. Therefore, it is not the Church but the Kingdom of God which is the ultimate goal of the divine economy of salvation.[376] Kasper opines that Jesus, in order to carry out the will of the Father inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven here on earth. He gradually revealed to humanity the mystery of his incarnation and redemption

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[373] Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 345.

[374] Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom*, 301.

[375] Stephen Benko, "The Kingdom of God in the Documents of Vatican II," in *Gottesreich und Menschenreich*, ed. Max Geiger (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1969), 574. Cf. also *Lumen Gentium* 31.

[376] Cf. Mariasusai Dhavamony, *The Kingdom of God and World Religions* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2004), 252 – 253.

and mysteries of the Kingdom of God, already present in the mystery of his person and which now grows visibly through the power of God in the world (LG 3).

Kasper also foresees a danger where the person of Jesus Christ could be subsumed in the Church, and eventually, the Church taking the place of Christ. If that happens, Kasper fears, that the Church will no longer "proclaim and testify to Jesus Christ," but will "become its own witness and testimony."[377] He asserts that the Church legitimately proclaims Jesus Christ as the Son of God and here quotes the Catholic Modernist Alfred Loisy, „*Jesus verkündete das Reich Gottes, gekommen ist die Kirche.*"[378] Stephen Benko, trying to show the relationship between Kingdom of God and the Church, opines:

> Earthly progress and the kingdom of God are not identical, but the former can contribute to the "better ordering of human society" and it thus affects the kingdom of God. The church helps the world and receives many benefits from it, but the one great task of the church is promotion of the kingdom of God. It is in Jesus Christ that all things will be re-established. The church, therefore, looks eagerly for his coming again.[379]

The interrelatedness between the Church and the Kingdom of God should be clearly understood: The Kingdom of God is present in the Church and hence, the Church becomes the sacrament of God's Kingdom on earth, seed, sign and instrument (RM 18) and is called to bear witness and be at the service of the Kingdom.

2.1.3.3 The Kingdom of God and *Ecclesia in Asia*

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* re-emphasises the idea of a new way of being Church, a call that has been even earlier voiced by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at its third assembly in Bangkok, 1982 and at its fifth at Bandung, Indonesia, 1990. Peter Phan strongly feels that this Synod was indeed a Copernican revolution as regards its ecclesiology is concerned, in which the reign of God is made the centre of Christian life and not the Church, thus making a paradigm shift from ecclesiocentricism to regnocentricism possible. Neither the expansion of the Church, her

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[377] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 28.

[378] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 233.

[379] Benko, "The Kingdom of God in the Documents of Vatican II," 577. Cf. also GS 39, 40 and 45; AG 7, 9 and 40.

boundaries, territories and structures nor the intensification of her influence should be the essence of her engagement.[380] However, the Church needs to be transparent, effective sign and instrument of the saving presence of the Kingdom of God and "her identity and mission are inseparable from the Kingdom of God" (EA 17). The Exhortation is also clear in reminding the Church that she is not an end unto herself, rather empowered by the Spirit of Christ and by promoting values of the Kingdom, she serves to accomplish Christ's salvation on earth.

The document finally reminds that the gospel and evangelisation are independent of the culture which constantly changes and transforms. Yet, the Kingdom of God comes to people who are profoundly linked to a culture and the building of the Kingdom of God cannot avoid borrowing elements from human cultures (EA 21). To acknowledge this fact, as being a sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God in a multi-religious and multi-cultural context is, for the Church no doubt, not only an esteemed commitment but also a formidable challenge. Whatever may be the impending confrontations and counterchallenges the Church might have to face, she should be however seen as the privileged place of encounter between God and man, where God reveals the mystery of his life and carries out his plan of salvation for the world (EA 24).

One of the effective methods of being a new way of Church in Asia is that, the Church takes up the challenge of assuming a strong prophetic role. By proclaiming the Gospel values and especially by promoting truth and justice, the Church becomes a credible prophetic sign of the Kingdom of God. Like Christ, the Church should strive to restore communion not only between God and humanity, but also establish a new communion among human beings, especially between those alienated from one another. She should also engage in bringing back those who have strayed away from the Church.

2.1.3.4 Guidelines from *Dominus Iesus*

The fifth chapter of the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* discusses the Church's mission of proclaiming and establishing the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Hence, the Church on earth plays the role of being the seed and the beginning of the kingdom (DI 18; UR 3). The Declaration distinctly emphasises the sacramental characteristic of the Church in

[380] Cf. Peter Phan, "*Ecclesia in Asia*: Challenges for Asian Christianity," *EAPR* 37, no. 3 (2000): 220.

being the Kingdom of God: "sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of unity of the entire human race" (DI 18). The Declaration also dissuades any line of separation between Christ, the Kingdom and the Church as it clearly states:

> If the kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the kingdom of God which he revealed. The result is a distortion of the meaning of the kingdom, which runs the risk of being transformed into a purely human or ideological goal and a distortion of the identity of Christ, who no longer appears as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected (cf. 1 Cor 15:27). Likewise, one may not separate the kingdom from the Church. It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the kingdom of God, of which she is the seed, sign and instrument. Yet, while remaining distinct from Christ and the kingdom, the Church is indissolubly united to both (DI 18).

In line with *Ecclesia in Asia*, that the Church is not an end to herself, the Declaration warns against any separation of the Kingdom from the Church. The Church, being the sacramental sign of the Kingdom of God, cannot survive remaining distinct from Christ and the Kingdom.[381]

A very significant guideline highlighted by this Declaration, which requires special attention is "the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church's visible boundaries" (RM 18) and this aspect of the Spirit's working should be rightly understood and discussed. The Kingdom concerns everyone: individuals, society and the world. Working for the Kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity present in human history, and furthermore building this Kingdom means working for the liberation from evil and all its forms. In other words, it is the manifestation and the realisation of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness.[382] Since the Church of Christ is like her master, a Church for all, no one-sided accentuations are to be entertained.

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[381] Cf. RM 18; EA 17 and also see *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 7, 1999. See also William Henn, "The Church and the Kingdom of God," *Studia Missionalia* 46 (1997): 142.

[382] Cf. RM 15, 18; DI 19

2.1.3.5 Asian Documents on the Kingdom of God

The Church in Asia, as the sacrament of God's Kingdom, has been contributing to the spiritual lives of the people of God and even of members of other religions. The Second Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) says:

> The Reign of God is the very reason for the being of the Church. The Church exists in and for the Kingdom. The Kingdom, God's gift and initiative, is already begun and is constantly being realised and made present through the Spirit. Where God is accepted, where the Gospel values are lived, where the human being is respected… there is the kingdom. It is far wider than the Church's boundaries. This already present reality is oriented towards the final manifestation and full perfection of the Reign of God.[383]

A theological consultation on "Evangelization in Asia" organised by the Office for FABC says:

> The Kingdom of God is therefore, universally present and at work especially in all such cases where people respond to God's offer of grace through Christ in the Spirit and enter into the kingdom through an act of faith…This goes to show that the Reign of God is a universal reality, extending far beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ, in which Christians and others share together; it is the fundamental "mystery of unity" which unites us more deeply than differences in religious allegiance are able to keep us apart.[384]

The Office of Theological Concerns of the FABC in its document on *Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony* recognises "in all sisters and brothers, of whatever faith-conviction and culture, fellow way-farers to God's Reign."[385] In their various responses to the *Lineamenta* of the Asian Synod, the Asian Bishops speak in the same way. The Indian Bishops say:

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[383] Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arévalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1970-1991*, Vol. I (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publication, 1997), 252.

[384] Franz-Josef Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1992-1996*, Vol. II (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997). 200.

[385] Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. II, 285.

> It is an accepted principle that we cannot comprehend a mystery; before it, our attitude needs to be one of reverent acceptance and humble openness. God's dialogue with Asian peoples through their religious experiences is a great mystery. We as Church enter into this mystery by dialogue through sharing and listening to the Spirit in others. Dialogue then, becomes an experience of God's Kingdom.[386]

Evangelii Nuntiandi, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI has strongly reaffirmed the missionary dimension of the Church. The Church in India has tried to flesh out this missionary dimension in various sectors of her interaction, especially with other religions. Dialogue with other faiths is an essential element of the Church's mission seen moving towards theocentrism. She is convinced that this world is God's creation and all belong to his Kingdom, since God is the creator of all.

In the above discussions concering the Kingdom of God and its relationship with the Church and the world, Kasper has tried to affirm that the Kingdom is established in the person of Jesus himself. If the Kingdom of God had gone down with Jesus' death, Kasper argues, there would be no more reason for hope, but rather a reason for resignation and scepticism.[387] Kasper has rightly pointed out that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God lay in his conviction that it is revealed and realised in his own life and ministry. Jesus not only preached the message of the mercy and compassion of God but also experienced it in his own life.[388] Later, in the resurrection, an act of God's confirmation and legitimation of the message and activity of the earthly Jesus, the implicit Christology of Jesus' earthly ministry is made explicit. It is through this decisive act of God that Jesus himself now becomes the Kingdom that he preached.[389]

Concluding Remarks

The motif 'Kingdom of God' has been extensively discussed in the history of Catholic theology and its interpretations are many. Kasper, in his theological discussions on this theme 'Kingdom of God,' is clear and logical in his understanding and formulations.

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[386] Peter C. Phan, "Responses of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the Lineamenta," in *The Asian Synod*, ed. Phan, 20-21.

[387] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 213.

[388] Cf. Kasper, *Barmherzigkeit*, 72.

[389] Cf. McDermott, "Current Theology," 341; also Cf. Randy L. Stice, "Jesus the Christ: The Christology of Walter Kasper," *The Heythrop Journal* 49, no. 2 (March, 2008): 242-244.

Applying the exegetical-cum-hermeneutical method, he brings out the salient features of the Kingdom of God, which according to him, is also foreshadowed in the Old Testament. His constant references to the events and prophecies of the Old Testament, well knitted and exquisitely embellished in the preaching of Jesus, substantiate his arguments. The Church, today, as the community of believers and the sign and sacrament of God's Kingdom, has a very eminent and supreme role to play. She has the task of realising and materialising the Kingdom of God, which was expressively inaugurated and set in motion by the Son and which in our present times, is animated, inspired, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

Kasper is clear concerning two facts: Humans cannot design or realise the Kingdom of God, because the coming of God's Kingdom is dependent on God's activity. Secondly, God's reign accords also with the human hopes and strivings for freedom, justice and peace. Hence, he asserts, that although the coming of God's Kingdom is solely God's action; its realisation does not exclude cooperative human action.[390]

Kasper has made it clear that the message of the Kingdom of God – love, mercy and compassion of God - is ultimate. It is a message for all and excludes none because, Jesus, through this message of the Kingdom has opened for everybody, an access to the Father. God has ultimately withdrawn his wrath and made room for his love and compassion.[391] The Kingdom of God is therefore, a present reality. It is God's – the Father, the Word and the Spirit – activity of building up the human community. The Church is called upon to be the symbol and servant of this ongoing project: building up of the Kingdom of God and subsequently, building up of the Church to be at the service of that Kingdom.

[390] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 166-172.

[391] Cf. Kasper, *Barmherzigkeit*, 73.

PART II: MIRACLES OF JESUS
SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Introduction

Generally, a miracle may be understood as an extraordinary event believed to manifest a supernatural work of God. It is an event attributed to divine intervention. The possibility of miracles is widely discussed today as well as highly debated. Several controversies with regard to miracles have mushroomed in the recent past. It has become a moot point in theological research, which now seems to have taken centre stage. Miracles being one of the criteria for canonisation of a person to sainthood, the late Pope St John Paul II (the second-longest documented papacy) canonised the highest number of persons to sainthood during his papacy of 26 years. This asserts the possibility of miraculous events even today. Miracles are considered acts of some supernatural entity or some unknown outside or external force. Religious and god-fearing people, in the first instance, have always attributed miracles to God, though these have occurred more often through human intervention.

Miracles played a significant role in the life of Jesus, especially in his ministry of preaching and healing. Kasper sees a close-knit relationship between the words and deeds of Jesus, which appear inseparable to him as he opines, "Jesus did not work by words alone, but with actions."[392] He further maintains that the Word of God, Jesus Christ, is a word that executes what it says; it is not informative, but performative and creative.[393] Miracles and healings, he observed, supported and confirmed Jesus' teachings and his

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[392] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 89. For more on miracles see, Wolfram Herrmann, *Die Wunder in der evangelischen Botschaft* (Berlin: Evang. Verl.-Anst., 1961); Reginald Horace Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (London: SCM, 1974); Lodewijk Monden, *Theologie des Wunders* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 103-125; Karl Gutbrod, *Die Wundergeschichten des Neuen Testaments dargestellt nach den ersten drei Evangelien* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verl., 1968); Rudolf Pesch, *Jesu ureigene Taten? Ein Beitrag zur Wunderfrage*, *QD* 52 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1970); Clive Staples Lewis, *Miracles. A Preliminary Study* (London: HarperCollins, 1947); Michael J. Wilkinson and J. P. Moreland, ed., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996); Romano Guardini, *Wunder und Zeichen* (Würzburg: Werkbund-Verl., 1959); Karl Rahner, "The Saving Force and Healing Power of Faith," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. V, 460-467; B. Weissmahr, „Gibt es von Gott gewirkte Wunder? Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zu einer verdrängten Problematik," *StdZ* 191 (1973): 47-63.

[393] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Gottes gegenwart in Jesus Christus: Vorüberlegungen zu einer weisheitlichen Christologie," in *Weisheit Gottes – Weisheit der Welt*, ed. Siegfried Wiedenhofer (St. Ottilien: Eos, 1987), 326.

divine origin. Hans Küng maintained that Jesus' deeds were thrilling and exciting, like his words.[394] Kasper attempts to analyse the miracles of Jesus in general, especially as far as their problematics and their theological significance are concerned.

A critical study and a right understanding of Jesus' miracles are of prime importance, not only to prove Jesus as the Son of God but also to ascertain God's plan of salvation through Jesus. Hence, analysing Kasper's perspective on miracles along with some other trends of thoughts on this subject matter are necessary in order to arrive at his understanding of miracles. Besides, it is also important to find out how significant these miracles were in the ministry of Jesus, so as to also understand his mission.

2.2 What are Miracles?

According to St. Augustine's definition which has been accepted by many theologians, even contemporary thinkers, a miracle is "an occurrence which is contrary to *what is known to nature*."[395] The biblical dictionary defines a miracle as "a phenomenon in nature which transcends the capacity of natural causes to such a degree that it must be attributed to the direct intervention of God."[396] A miracle is also viewed as an interruption of the natural law or phenomenon which is really perceptible.

Recent scholars have produced a variety of studies and excellent findings that attempt to define a 'miracle' more systematically. These scholars attempt to illumine the typical form of a miracle narrative, and elaborately describe the hymns of praise or gratitude addressed to the deity, through whom the miracle occurred or to whom a particular miracle was attributed.[397] Harold E. Remus of Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada, defines a miracle as having three components: an act which causes wonder, an act which

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[394] Cf. Hans Küng, „Wunder – Die Gretchenfrage des christlichen Glaubens?," *ThQ* 151 (1971): 214.

[395] Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles*, 8.

[396] John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 578.

[397] Besides the books mentioned in the beginning of this chapter on miracles, a cursory look at these following books would also give the reader a comprehensive understanding of what a miracle is and of other related elements pertaining to miracles. See Howard C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Socio-historical Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 3-14; idem, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1-8.

is extraordinary and inexplicable in terms of everyday causation, and an act ascribed to supernatural force or agency.[398]

It is clear that miracles are rare, exceptional, and extra-ordinary events that a normal human being cannot cause or bring about. Miracles are the characteristics and uniqueness of God's activities, activities that only God works or someone in his name, with his help and as commissioned.[399] Further, a miracle is a sign of the Word of God realised in this world. It is usually seen as a powerful act of God which is through personal reflection and interpretation, subsequently discerned as a sign of revelation.[400]

Kasper, in this regard, holds on to the traditional teaching of the Church. For him miracles are perceivable events outside the possibility of nature, brought about by God's almighty power, confirming his verbal revelation. He is clear in his understanding that God cannot replace this-worldly causality because he is beyond space and time and because of this reason one is wrong in thinking that God is completely outside the framework of a miracle. Miracles by God are "'acts of power' (*dunameis*) and 'signs' (*séméia*)"[401] (*Machttaten und Zeichen*), mediated by a created secondary cause related to this worldly context and proved as divine intervention. Miracles are therefore, all those acts where God's power is in action through Jesus, authenticating him as the 'Son of God.'

These definitions lead us to a further basic question of reality: Are miracles after all possible? Do people still believe in miracles today? For every unique happening, are not people today trying to offer a convincing and plausible explanation, whereby the event is either considered natural and explicable, attributed to human achievement? If so, what about the extra-ordinary events? Since the scientific field has progressed tremendously and is further advancing, making breakthroughs and cutting edges, the word 'miracle' seems to have lost its original meaning and has become banal and timeworn.

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[398] Cf. John Henry Neyrey, "Miracles, In Other Words: Social Science Perspectives in Healings," in *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth*, ed. by John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 19.

[399] Cf. Adolf Kolping, *Wunder und Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Frankfurt am Main: Gerhard Kaffke, 1969), 9.

[400] Cf. Monden, *Theologie des Wunders*, 38.

[401] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 92; See also Päpstliche Bibelkommission, „Inspiration und Wahrheit der Heiligen Schrift," Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhls, Nr. 196 (Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Februar 2014), 187.

2.2.1 The Miracles of Jesus: Problem-Evoking Issues

The advocates of Naturalism are the first among many who utterly oppose the possibilities of miracles. Naturalism promotes only natural laws and forces that operate in the world. Hence, miracles for Naturalists, are unintelligent and incoherent.

Rudolf Bultmann once penned: "It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of… miracles."[402] Feuerbach regarded the miracle stories as the imaginary fulfilment of fantasy wishes. He asserted, "Miracle is as rapid as wish is impatient! Miraculous powers realise human wishes in a moment, at one stroke, without any hindrance… The power of a miracle is the sorcery of the imagination, which satisfies without contradiction all the wishes of the heart."[403] Anton Constande, influenced by the works of Fredrick Nietzsche, called the miracles of Jesus "a showman's publicity stunts."[404]

Since the time of Jesus, followed by the post-resurrection period and even later on, miracles of Jesus have been under constant scrutiny and dispute. The questions about miracles and their possibilities have faced severe protests, especially after the dawn of scientific understandings and findings. Cicero formulated his scepticism in the following manner:

> For nothing can happen without a cause; nothing happens that cannot happen, and when what was capable of happening has happened, it may not be interpreted as miracles. Consequently, there are no miracles… We therefore draw this conclusion: what was incapable of happening never happened, and what was capable of happening is not a miracle.[405]

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[402] Meier, *A Marginal Jew*. Vol. II, 520. See also Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphian: Fortress Press, 1984), 2-8.

[403] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957), 129, 134. Also cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, (1974), trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 288.

[404] Hendrik van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 9.

[405] Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 7.

In the age of new reasoning C. S. Lewis, Norman Geisler, William Lane Craig and some other Christian thinkers argued on the one hand, that miracles are reasonable and plausible; quite many on the other hand contend, that a miracle is transgression of the law of nature. Such arguments, both for and against miracles, are prevalent even today when miracles and their credibility become topics of discussion.

Another important issue is the query: Why cannot miracles be considered as psychological or some kind of suggestive therapies? Discussions on these lines are also gaining momentum today. The main protagonist to advocate this line of thought is Donald Capps, who elaborates this theory convincingly in his book, *Jesus the Village Psychiatrist: Disabling Anxiety in a World of Insecurity*, published on January 7, 2008. Given the facts, it is however crystal clear, that at least a few among the miracles that Jesus performed cannot be absolutely called psychological since, they do not deal at the thinking and feeling level of a person, for example, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, whose body had already started decomposing. Some miracles appeared to be psychological, in the sense that a special or charismatic power flowed from Jesus to the beneficiaries. This inspired faith in them and Kasper constantly stresses this faith-element in the miracles of Jesus.

Jesus became a popular preacher because of the wonders he worked and especially because of his miraculous power that sometimes took people by surprise. Diverse responses to these spell-bound events uncover the undeniable fact that Jesus did not merely do something but that he did something extra-ordinary. However, he was also accused by his contemporaries of being a magician. His opponents felt that Jesus was leading people astray, not by his approach or techniques, but intuitively. Graham Stanton maintains: "While it is true that on some definitions miracle and magic are closely related, it is worth noting that in antiquity (as today) magic generally had strong negative connotations."[406] Further, magic is also considered as a "practise used to fulfil human desires, wishes and needs with the help of deities, demons and powers of nature."[407] However, no such elements are recorded in the Gospels, relating to the miracles of Jesus.

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[406] Graham Stanton, "Message and Miracles," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 67.

[407] Bernd Kollmann, "Jesus and Magic: The Question of the Miracles," in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Vol. IV. *Individual Studies*, ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 3061.

Kasper maintains that, even though popularity and recognition was not the intention and the objective of Jesus, still he was sought after and followed by a huge multitude.

In Kasper's understanding, since the Enlightenment era, the miracles of Jesus have caused two kinds of problems and they indeed require further clarifications:[408] Historical – since miracles in the present times are observed sceptically and this necessitates their careful examination, and Scientific – since science calls for reconsideration of the concept 'miracle' and its possibility.

2.2.1.1 Miracles: Historically Analysed

When miracles are historically analysed, a crucial question emerges at the very outset: Did Jesus really work miracles? This important question cannot be neglected and undervalued since people today are interested to know more about the historicity of miracles. They reflect even further: Do the miracle stories in the synoptic gospels basically have any historical value or are they just the product of Christian faith?

Right at the beginning two important observations are to be kept in mind before an answer is attempted to such queries. On the one side, there is a need to apply historical critical method when seeking to ascertain the authenticity of Jesus' miracles, and on the other side, scientists ought not to be allowed to dictate to the historians beforehand what the results of their investigations should be.[409]

To these questions concerning miracles there have been different responses, influenced by one's own theological setting. Rationalists call miracles an insult to reason, since miracles are scientifically impossible. Either, one must be able to explain the happening using the laws of nature or else such an event has never taken place. Based on these arguments they concluded that the so-called miracles of Jesus are either myths or inventions of Christian ignorance, or they are merely a misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the natural phenomena.[410]

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[408] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 89.

[409] Cf. Reginald H. Fuller, *Die Wunder Jeus in Exegese und Verkündigung* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 27.

[410] For a detailed understanding on this issue, cf. Reginald H. Fuller, *Die Wunder Jesu in Exegeses und Verkündigung*, 25-52.

Here, it is apt to analyse the findings of Bultmann who did not doubt that "Jesus performed deeds, which both in His own eyes and in those of his contemporaries were 'miracles,'" and he further argued that "most of the accounts of miracles in the Gospels are the distillation of legends, or at least they have a legendary trimming. The course of their history in tradition was one in which the motives changed, and variants and exaggerations occurred." Interestingly Bultmann distinguishes two elements in a miracle – "a miracle is a deed of God, an 'action' of God," and it is a "miraculous event contra naturam."[411] Further, with his concept of demythologisation, a method of discovering the authentic underlying meaning of events, Bultmann declares:

> Man's knowledge and mastery of the world have advanced to such extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world – in fact, there is hardly anyone who does… The only honest way of reciting the creeds is to strip the mythological framework away from the truth they enshrine.[412]

Kasper notes that in order to have a better and clearer view and understanding of Jesus' miracles, they need to be placed first and foremost under the historico-critical method. This method is usually employed to investigate the origins of an ancient text, to understand the world behind the text and to ascertain the original meaning of the text. One who has read all four evangelists presenting the life of one-and-the-same person Jesus, but who appears different in their presentations, will never overlook how these writers without doubt enumerate the miracles of Jesus; into the bargain, multiplying, intensifying and magnifying them, thus presenting them as impressive and awe-inspiring.[413]

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[411] Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 31-32.

[412] Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller, second edition (London: SPCK, 1964), 4

[413] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 89-90. Literary criticism acknowledges certain discrepancies found in the miracle accounts. Jairus's daughter in Mark is on the point of death but in Matthew she is already dead, the healing of one blind and possessed in one account becomes the healing of two blind men and two possessed, the feeding of the 4000 in one becomes 5000 in the other and seven left-over baskets become twelve. Kasper clarifies here that if such tendency of developing, multiplying and intensifying is found in the gospels themselves, then it must have also existed in the period before the gospels were compiled. Hence, he maintains that the application of historico-critical method is an absolute, unavoidable necessity.

Kasper also acknowledges the result of the comparative study of the miracles of Jesus in the rabbinic and Hellenistic background. This draws attention to the danger of the possibility of a transfer of such miracle-themes found in the ancient sources by the New Testament on Jesus, through the use of non-Christian symbols. Kasper also places on record numerous parallels that exist with the contemporaries of Jesus like Apollonius of Tyana, as well as many other healing reports, especially from the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus.[414] However, he explicitly recalls, that Jesus refused any demonstration of his power and authority to his opponents, especially when Pharisees demanded signs. Such demanding of signs were nothing but challenges to God but Jesus wanted just the opposite – true faith (Mt 9:22; 15:28; 21:21; Mk 5:34; 16:14; Lk 7:9; 17:6).

To the question: Could one call miracles of Jesus 'legendary'? Kasper maintains that such miracles (so called legends) should be examined "less for their historical than for their theological content. They say something, not about individual facts of saving history, but about the single saving event which is Jesus Christ."[415] Hence, miracles are theological and kerygmatic in nature and moreover statements of faith, which point out to the single saving event and person of Jesus Christ. Küng approached this problem from a slightly different perspective, calling miracles popular narratives that evoke excitement and astonishment, as they are in the service of the proclamation of Jesus. Hence, miracles for Küng are neither direct reporting nor scientifically proved documentation, neither are they historical nor medical or psychological reports. Küng questions the right of a historian to speak about the miraculous deeds of Jesus under such conditions and also the accessibility one has to the reality that is hidden behind such popular narratives.[416]

That the miracles of Jesus were historical remain undisputed to Kasper. Or else, Jesus' earthly life would certainly not have left behind the general impression and a strong one, that he was a wonder-worker, a miracle-worker. These extraordinary actions of Jesus that stupefied his contemporaries and the critical-historical consideration of the Gospel tradition, lead to an undeniable fact that the historical core of the miracle tradition cannot be disputed. According to Kasper, the claim made by the Gospel that God inaugurated his eschatological saving action in and through the historical Jesus from Nazareth, cannot be

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[414] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 90. Asclepius is the god of medicine and healing in ancient Greek religion but some historians have proposed that he might have been a historical figure.

[415] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 90.

[416] Cf. Küng, „Wunder – Die Gretchenfrage des christlichen Glaubens?" 216.

denied. To the question - besides his preaching and other activities, did Jesus also perform miracles? Apologetics, defending the Christian faith against objections and misrepresentations would answer: God can work miracles and since Jesus is God-incarnate, he is capable of performing them. It is therefore an unscientific apriorism to basically rule out miracles.[417]

2.2.1.2 Miracles: Scientifically Analysed

How can one explain miracles, if one has to argue based on scientific approach? Do miracles of Jesus have any place or significance in today's scientific world, a world that is law-bound and law-determined? It is very crucial here to make a preliminary note of two important facts: firstly, the scientific realm does not acknowledge any event without a physical cause which means, science cannot think of anything that has no physical cause and a definable origin; and secondly, science now also accepts its limitation that, "it cannot even in principle encompass the totality of all determining factors."[418] This finding of Kasper gives his readers yet another important piece of information: science, and its possibility to know the entire reality is questionable.

If the laws of Nature are necessary truths, no miracle can break them. But when God prepares to work a miracle he comes "like a thief in the night" (1 Thess 5:2). From the standpoint of a scientist, a miracle is a form of doctoring, tampering or cheating, but this stand of the scientist is unwarranted. Kasper tries to explain that no scientist can claim to have known all the absolute dynamics of the created realities. What happens in a miracle is that, a new factor is inserted into a given situation, namely, the supernatural force on which the scientist had not reckoned. And when the actual miracle takes place the necessary facts of the laws of nature are only distanced, so that it renders the happening of the miracle possible. It also gives a certitude that a miracle must occur, the moment a supernatural power enters. Hence, it is wrong to define a miracle as the violation of the natural law.[419] A miracle, according to C. S. Lewis, a British Novelist and a Christian

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[417] Cf. Fuller, *Die Wunder Jesu in Exegeses und Verkündigung*, 26

[418] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 93. See also W. Weissmahr, „Gibt es von Gott gewirkte Wunder? Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zu einer verdrängten Problematik," *StdZ* 191 (1973): 47-63. The whole objection raised here is whether the human mind can get to the entire knowledge of a reality? The facticity of a reality is questioned.

[419] C. S. Lewis, *Wunder: Möglich, wahrscheinlich, undenkbar*? (Basel: Brunnen Verlag, 1980), 70-71.

Apologist, is the unique personal involvement of God in creation and history. A miracle is absolutely not an event that has neither cause nor an effect. Its cause is God's doing and the effects take place corresponding to the laws of nature.

At this juncture, one needs to take note of two important observations: To have complete knowledge of the laws of nature is difficult and it is also difficult to replace causality with God, who is beyond space and time. Hence, Kasper maintains that to imagine something happening above the laws of nature is only possible to one who knows and believes that God, who is above natural laws, exists. Further, he believes that miracles, from the religious point of view are then signs, dynamics and acts of power, a personal initiative of God. It is this power of God through his word that takes a symbolic physical form.[420] While considering a miracle as God's transcendental intervention in natural events, a complicated argument arises. Since the perceptible event is a physical and corporeal one and human cognition also belongs to a physical realm and not a meta-physical one, it is difficult to assume and derive from an external, outwardly noticeable happening, the actuality and the nature of God's intervention.[421]

Miracles also become a problem when one tries to define the relationship between God and the world because miracles are extraordinary, bewildering, incredible and fascinating events, the outcome of God's personal initiative, but through the action of secondary created causes. A miracle then is a divinely symbolic act in which the supernatural adapts and conforms itself to the natural and the supernatural is thus, displayed and exemplified in the natural. This is only realisable through a modification of the ordinary process of a natural event. The modification here makes nature become 'more-than-itself' and at the same time, nature does not stop to be nature. In this modification, the manifestation of God is recognised in the ordinary natural process, who through a special intervention in the natural events reveals his divine power.[422] In other words, Kasper explains, that in a miracle, God uses the laws of nature and in and through them, shows men that he helps and holds them. Therefore, these events become very unusual, special signs of his saving work. This is how the Scripture views the unity and the relationship between God and the created world.

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[420] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 91-96. Jesus is presented not only as a Messiah with words but also one with deed, with actions, one who is active in realizing this kingdom in word and work.

[421] Cf. Monden, *Theologie des Wunders*, 54.

[422] Cf. Monden, *Theologie des Wunders*, 41.

It is possible to have a clearer idea of miracles and the manner in which these disclose the meaning of reality, if one is able to delineate the significance of Jesus' miracles.

2.2.2 The Miracles of Jesus and their Theological Significance

No better meaning and significance could be given to the miracles of Jesus than that of St. Luke who mentions in the Acts of the Apostles 10:38, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Through the powerful and miraculous deeds of Jesus, God's power erupts among men, giving them a tinge of his divine touch. Such deeds of Jesus did lead people to awe, wonder and admiration but at the same time, led many to faith, not only those persons who were healed, but also many others who witnessed such miracles. Kasper calls the miracles of Jesus as faith-instilling moments, since the witnesses kept asking each other – Who is this man? Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? (Mk 4:41), Can this be the Son of David? (Mt 12:23).

John P. Meier, an American Roman Catholic Priest and Biblical Scholar, finally perceived in Jesus a convergence of different mutually reinforcing qualities: a prophet, gatherer of Israel, a teacher, a healer, an exorcist and one who also raised the dead to life, and that made Jesus stand out.[423] There is hardly any doubt that Jesus' actions amazed his contemporaries. But for a person in need of such a miraculous power of Jesus, it did not cost him anything more than a minimal effort (approaching Jesus and requesting him) before he got what he wanted. That means, miracles were not like advertising goods, freely distributed at public squares but they were, Kasper maintains, Jesus' answer to the needs of those who requested, whose constant pleading gradually took the form of an interpersonal relationship of trust and love between the healer and the healed.[424] Kasper's reflections as regards miracles and their theological significance may be summed up under a few important sub-titles.

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[423] Cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1039-1047.

[424] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 91.

2.2.2.1 Jesus' Miracles: Fulfilment of the Old Testament Prophecies

Kasper admits that Jesus was the Messiah with words and deeds and therefore, the miracles that Jesus performed were neither meant for entertainment or amusement nor were they a crowd-pulling attraction. Rather, miracles were the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament as Jesus placed himself under God's will with an act of total obedience (Is 29:18-19; 35: 5-6; 61:1). Miracles that Jesus performed had two major functions: they revealed the power of God through Jesus' human lowliness, and they affirmed the divine authority of Jesus. Kasper puts it cogently:

> Through his miracles Jesus recapitulates the Old Testament; in them the justice of God promised in the Old Testament prevails. With these miracles Jesus places himself under God's will as revealed in the Old Testament. His miracles are therefore also an act of obedience. That distinguishes them from magic and the miracles of the Hellenistic wonder-workers.[425]

L. Monden made a systematic study of the theology of miracles and delineated their different features. People, who do not believe in miracles or even those who find it difficult to accept them, regard miracles as something similar to trickiness, phantasmagoria or illusion. But the positive and salvific meaning of miracles, he says, is primarily seen in the person who performs these miracles in the context and circumstances in which they happen, and in the wonderful miraculous event itself.[426]

Miracles had the auxiliary function of the confirmation of signs and thereby had to also prove the legitimacy of the message, and this was expected from every true prophet of God in Judaism.[427] In and through the person of Jesus and especially in his deeds, these messages of old as revealed by the prophets in the Old Testament were realised. Thus, as Kasper sees it, the message and the miracles are inextricably linked. Jesus claims that his ministry is the fulfilment of the Scripture's promises and the hope of the old (Lk 4:16-19) and that he has come to fulfil these, so that all the Old Testament's promises, especially

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[425] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 97.

[426] Cf. Monden, *Theologie des Wunders*, 57-77. In these pages Monden develops this theme elaborately.

[427] See Fritz Stolz, „Zeichen und Wunder. Die prophetische Legitimation und ihre Geschichte," *ZThK* 69 (1972): 125-144.

the justice of God, prevails.[428] Answering John's question concerning the identity of Jesus (Mt. 11:4-6), "he (Jesus) claimed that his healing activity carried out among those on the fringes of society was in fulfilment of the promises for the coming age referred to in Isa 29.18-19; 35.5-6; 61.1."[429] It could be stated that, although Rabbis and other miracle workers seemed to be running a parallel show, competing with Jesus, finally what mattered was that the miracles that Jesus performed, placed him in a higher class in comparision to his contemporary competitors.

2.2.2.2 Jesus' Miracles: Signs of the Kingdom of God

Kasper observes the miracles of Jesus as signs and expressions of the Kingdom of God, especially the arrival of the "physical and visible dimensions of the Kingdom of God"[430] in the world. These signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God, Kasper believes, mark the end of the power and reign of evil and point towards a new creation, instilling new hope and giving a foretaste of life that is complete and total in God. Hence, according to him, miracles as signs of the Kingdom of God are meant to restore fellowship with God. Moltmann gives a much better clarity to this thought when he says, "If the kingdom of God is coming as Jesus proclaimed, then salvation is coming as well. If salvation comes to the whole creation, then the health of all created beings is the result – health of body and soul, individual and community, human beings and nature."[431] Contrary to this, Crossan, who understood the Kingdom of God as a mode of life in the immediate present, attempted to demonstrate Jesus as a magician.[432]

Jesus explicitly understood his healings and exorcisms as inaugurating the Kingdom of God.[433] While God carries out the expulsion of demons, Jesus thinks of himself as "God's instrument and medium through which the power of the kingdom becomes operative."[434] Most of the Scripture scholars agree that the clearest and best known saying as regards

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[428] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 97. Kasper argues that since Jesus places himself under God's plan of salvation, an act of pure obedience, the deeds that Jesus works cannot be considered as magic. His deeds are weightier than the Hellenistic wonder-workers.

[429] Stanton, "Message and Miracles," 68.

[430] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 95.

[431] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 104.

[432] Cf. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 303-353.

[433] See Marcus Bockmuel, *The Jesus* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1994), 164-167.

[434] Cf. Thomas W. Manson, *The Saying of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 86.

the miracles of Jesus is the following: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Mt 12:28; Lk 11:20). In other words, Jesus' exorcisms were not preparatory to, nor were they signs or evidence of the coming of God's reign; they were, in themselves, the Kingdom of God, expressed in the lives of those healed.[435]

Kasper clearly highlights the speciality of Jesus' healings, as he argues that, Jesus not only brought physical wholeness but also offered them a feeling of acceptance. These gestures of Jesus, explains N. T. Wright, were "part of that open welcome which went with the inauguration of the kingdom… signs which were intended as, and would have been perceived as, the physical inauguration of the kingdom of Israel's god, the putting into action of the welcome and the warning which were the central message of the kingdom and its redefinition"[436]

Further, one more significant issue that should not escape attention and go unnoticed, is the issue concerning the incompatibility of Sabbath and sickness. Though healing on the Sabbath was forbidden and was one of the many serious allegations raised against Jesus, Jesus considered such healings on the Sabbath as important actions leading to restoration of relationships – between God and humans and among humans. Kollmann meaningfully articulates this issue as he opines that, the object of observing Sabbath was that "Sabbath possesses eschatological holiness and provides a foretaste of the world to come, which will be all Sabbath. Since there will be no suffering in the coming kingdom of God, sickness and Sabbath are not compatible."[437]

Kasper considers Jesus as God's agent who moves God's creation towards eschatological fulfilment. Jesus, through his healing ministry, inaugurated the Kingdom of God and restored life (both physical and spiritual) in God's creation, although, his healing activities were sometimes confronted with disapproval and hostility.

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[435] Cf. Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 269.

[436] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Vol. II (London: SPCK, 1996), 192 and 196.

[437] Kollmann, "Jesus and Magic: The Question of the Miracles," 3075-3076.

2.2.2.3 Jesus' Miracles: Signs of the Salvation of the World

Kasper maintains that the miracles of Jesus are primarily signs of salvation and signs of the eschatological Kingdom of God and therefore, according to Kasper, both these cannot be separated. The Kingdom of God is not something static but a powerful dynamism, an event, a progressive happening, a powerful divine-human intervention. Mussner is firm in asserting that the works of Jesus depend decisively on the announcement of salvation whose main content is the dawn of the eschatological Kingdom of God. As a result, one can say that without the miracles that are attributed to Jesus in the gospels, Jesus is no more Christ, no more the bringer of salvation to Israel and to the Gentiles. It is in and through these miracles that the reign of God is actualised. It can therefore be logically concluded – without miracles Jesus is not the Christ.[438]

Furthermore, Kasper also maintains that miracles are not despotic or random demonstrations by God but are performed in a universal context, in a historical-promising context. They testify an anticipation of the eschatological salvific might and healing power of God which dawned ultimately and definitively in the resurrection of Jesus. Mußner further adds that through the miracles, Jesus offered the sick and the possessed, temporary healing, and furthermore showed clearly the imminent salvation of the entire creation.[439] Kasper indicates that when the miracles of Jesus are closely observed, one notices that Jesus did not perform all types/categories of miracles, but only those that were related and closely associated with the salvation of the world and humanity, only those that signified hope for the world and foreshadowed imminent salvation. In this sense, the miracles of Jesus could be called works of grace, which God gifts to the world to redeem it from every bond of sin and evil.

Jesus, on being asked if he was the one who is to come, replied "the blind receive their sight… (Mt 11:3; Lk 7:19, 22)." Twelftree maintains that 'the poor' in Jesus' answer 'the poor have good news brought to them' signifies "not the disadvantaged sections of society but are the entire nation of humiliated and dispirited returnees in Jerusalem

[438] Cf. Franz Mußner, *Die Wunder Jesu: Eine Hinführung* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1967), 82-84.
[439] Cf. Mußner, *Die Wunder Jesu*, 73-78.

awaiting salvation."[440] Hence, Kasper maintains that salvation that Jesus brings through his miracles is nothing but the coming of redemption and deliverance.

Miracles contain a promise that the world will be guided and led to salvation and this is already figuratively and symbolically seen in Jesus and his work.[441] As mentioned earlier, Jesus' miracles, like the nature of the Kingdom of God, had an eschatological perspective. Kasper uses the Latin term "*signa prognostica*"[442] to indicate that the miracles of Jesus contain an eschatological character pointing out to the future, and that they guarantee a bright hope of total liberation and a new reconciled world. If Bultmann draws the attention to the twofold characteristic of miracles, namely, forgiveness of sins and faith, Kasper goes a step further, insisting on the element of hope that miracles evoke, hope of the salvation of the body in the world. Denying miracles as a sign of hope for the world, contends Kasper, is the abandoning of human hope. One could easily conceive the idea that Jesus was aiming at a new world rather than a better world. Whether the miracles of Jesus are seen in the context of his preaching or in a revealed community, the miraculous activities of Jesus are however, the presence of the mighty power of God and those faith-awakening acts which animate a person existentially and invite a response to this event.[443]

God, through his revelation, gives humanity different signs. He converts ordinary and common signs into totally new ones, through which he reveals himself to his creation. These revelations of God are sometimes difficult to be sensed at the first instance, given the limited natural understanding and perception of humans. God also grants humans possibility and the power of cognition and comprehension – new eyes in order to discern new meanings in the old signs. Monden call this new and higher comprehensive capacity as faith.[444]

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[440] Cf. Joseph Augustine Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, AB 28* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 147-149; also Graham H. Twelftree, "The Message of Jesus 1: Miracles, Continuing Controversies," in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Vol. III. *The Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2521-2522.

[441] Cf. Mußner, *Die Wunder Jesu*, 73.

[442] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 95.

[443] Cf. Kolping, *Wunder und Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, 33.

[444] Cf. Monden, *Theologie des Wunders*, 40.

Kasper promptly identifies and analyses the close proximity between miracles and faith, since for him, the need and the purpose of miracles is to arouse and enliven the sensibility of wonder in a person and provoke a free answer from him, so as to make it a faith-evoking event. It is true that Jesus would not work miracles whenever he noticed a lack of faith, but that does not mean that faith itself is the power that results in miracles.[445] To recognise an incident as God's working, faith is important and necessary. This faith consists not only in recognising and accepting an event as God's work, but at the same time, it entails giving oneself up totally to this saving deed of God. Therefore, Fuller concludes that, miracles are not proofs, but invitations and challenges to faith.[446]

Though miracles are signs of faith, Kasper presumes that even to recognise miracles as miracles and that they are acts of God, presupposes some element of faith (Mk 9:22b-24). That said, Kasper is convinced that only when one is open in faith, is one capable of experiencing miracles from God, because through one's faith one shares in the almighty power of God. Faith provides access to the miracles of Jesus and makes one participant in the fulfiling of God's plan in Jesus Christ, a plan for the salvation and redemption of entire mankind.

2.2.2.4 Jesus' Miracles: The Role of the Holy Spirit

Kasper asserts that Jesus, unlike the Pharisees and the Scribes, was an active teacher and his deeds supported his words. The Gospels narrate instances where people who encountered his deeds, displayed a wide variety of mixed emotions. If some raised their eyes with awe and wonder, others had their own reservations in accepting them as God's work; if some thanked God for such an awesome event, others accused Jesus of being possessed and insane. By and large, these faith-instilling moments moved many to believe in God and in the glorification of Jesus. All those who witnessed such wonders and believed in God's power, publicly acknowledged, "Truly, you are the Son of God" (Mt 14:33; 27:54; Mk 3:11).

The miracles of Jesus are, for Kasper, signs and anticipations of the coming of the Kingdom and therefore, the ultimate question regarding miracles is not scientific but

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[445] Cf. Mußner, *Die Wunder Jesu*, 69; also see Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 121.

[446] Cf. Fuller, *Die Wunder Jesu in Exegese und Verkundigung*, 18-19.

theological.[447] "Miracles, the historical nucleus of which is indisputable," are for him, "signs and anticipations of this new and reconciled world that has been made whole."[448] In other words, breaking into the existing chaos, miracles restore wholeness and integration, the hallmarks of God's original creation. Furthermore, to talk about the acts and deeds of Jesus without making reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit in him, would according to the Scripture be futile, and Kasper asserts this truth based on the Pauline text 1 Cor 12:3. Besides, all gospel authors found miracle-stories important for their faith and for understanding Jesus and his role, as one anointed with the Holy Spirit and sent by God.

Jesus healed because he was the Messiah, the Son of God, anointed with the Holy Spirit and thereby, also confirmed his message of salvation. Kasper does agree with this line of thought and makes special references to Jesus as a human person, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was 'full of' or 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (Lk 4:1; 5:17; 6:19)[449] and the virgin birth of Jesus emphasises and accentuates the active intervention of the Holy Spirit, right from the very beginning of Jesus' earthly existence. The earthly life of Jesus was "characterised by the Spirit" since Jesus "was always led by the Spirit."[450] Further, it could be categorically said that the person of Jesus Christ and all the soteriological activities are inseparable from the activity of the Spirit.[451] In the words of Roger Haight "The symbol of the Spirit more forthrightly makes the claim that God, God's very self, acted in and through Jesus… symbol of God as Spirit is not a personification of God but refers directly to God, so that it is clear from the very beginning that nothing less than God was at work in Jesus.[452]

Theissen, who speaks about the uniqueness of Jesus as a miracle worker, sees in Jesus two conceptual worlds combined, worlds that had never existed side by side before: "the apocalyptic expectation of universal salvation in the future and the episodic realisation of salvation in the present, through miracles. They are symbolic actions in which the

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[447] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 94f.

[448] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 168.

[449] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 95-98.

[450] Joseph H. P. Wong, "The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus," *Gregorianum* 75 (1992): 61, 73.

[451] Cf. Doss, *Christ in the* Spirit, 127. Here, the author not only highlights the essence of Kasper's Spirit Christology, but also attempts to prove Kasper's stand that Jesus is the bearer and the giver of the Spirit, and that it is in his own person that his activities reached its perfection.

[452] Roger Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," *TS* 53, no. 2 (1992): 272.

experienced negativity of human existence is overcome by an appeal to a revelation of the sacred."[453] *Ecclesia in Asia* has repeatedly referred and urged the Church in Asia to constantly witness the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and specially his works that brought the message of salvation to humankind. It is not enough for one to admire and wonder at the miracles of Jesus, but more importantly, what is required here is, one's self-conversion to the Good News.[454]

Finally, it is clear that Scripture testifies to the special power that came from Jesus when he especially touched the sick. Jesus too was conscious that he was living and moving in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Kasper believes that in these sensory and perceivable interventions of God's power, miracles are also signs of God's interpersonal relationship with humanity, a medium that brings the message of salvation in a compelling and effective manner.

2.2.2.5 The Kingdom of God and Miracles in the Indian Context

The Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* has posed some challenges which the Asian churches could face in her ardent proclamation of the salvific message of Jesus. It also recommends that the Church in Asia should focus her attention on the intense yearning for God displayed by the people, and proclaim with vigour in word and deed that Jesus is the Saviour (EA 9). Therefore, it is equally necessary that the contents of the Church's proclamation is addressed and discussed at regular intervals, also among the concerned.

The Church of Jesus Christ is missionary and the work of evangelisation is the duty of the whole People of God.[455] Evangelisation is thus, not to be understood as an isolated task or an individual venture; it is always an ecclesial task which has to be carried out in communion with the whole community of faith (EA 42). There can be no true proclamation of the Gospel unless Christians also offer life-witness in harmony with the message they preach. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is nothing but the values of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached and these values are to be now concretely lived to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ present and relevant. The term *basileia* is generally

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[453] Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Traditions*, 277-278, 300.

[454] Cf. Päpstliche Bibelkommission, „Inspiration und Wahrheit der Heiligen Schrift," 187.

[455] Cf. The Second Vatican Council. Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 2 and 35.

translated and understood as having two meanings: "the Reign of God, the active exercise of the divine Kingship… it signifies also the area, the human domain, the community where this Reign is recognised and accepted."[456]

The Church in India has been conscious and aware of her role as a sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God and has been constantly striving to be faithful and committed to this mandate. Therefore, the Church, as the sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God, has been gladly accepted in the Indian scenario. *Ecclesia in Asia*, besides valuable encouragement, also sparked some more flames of motivation and inspiration to the Church in Asia. But the incentives and stimulus provided by this document have not yet been fully actualised, especially by the Church in India, due to some practical difficulties. This aspect of the problem will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Wherever possible and feasible, the Gospel of God, the message of the Kingdom has been effectively proclaimed, and the fruits produced by the receivers of this Good News vouch for it. These are the churches that are normally named as growing, flourishing and productive, dynamic in liturgical celebrations, especially, the celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist. Active participation and vitality have been the hallmarks of the Church in India. Celebrations are made more meaningful and relevant, thanks to the Second Vatican Council that made a progressive move in facilitating translations of the liturgical texts in vernacular languages. Hence, one can say that the Kingdom has been taking shape wherever and whenever the Church in India is trying to live faithfully and deeply, what it has been called and consecrated for.

On the other hand, the Church as the Body of Christ is also enduring various sufferings. Cases of Christians being persecuted and of churches and statues being destroyed often hit the headlines. Proclamation of the Gospel and evangelisation has been often misinterpreted and misjudged as cases of conversion. Challenges of inculturation have also posed many problems. Yet, in the midst of all such turmoil, the Church in India has indeed stood the test of faith throughout the ages, displaying a high quality of tolerance and forgiveness.

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[456] Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. R. C. De Peaux (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 54

Besides the mandate of proclamation of the Gospel, the Church in India is also involved in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Many wonderful and mighty deeds do take place in the name of the Lord. The same Spirit that worked in the miracles performed by Jesus Christ is active also in the Church and her ministers. But the Church should not forget Kasper's so-called warning of falsely relating faith and miracles to prayers and answers. In other words, Kasper means that every prayer need not be immediately answered and likewise, every act of faith need not result in a miracle.[457] As Fuller reminds, "faith is always a free decision" and "it is never coerced by overwhelming proof."[458] The Church should make the faithful aware of the truth, that their devotion to the person of Jesus Christ, to the sacraments and to different saints is an act of faith, which not only has to be constantly deepened, but also has to bear fruits in personal life. Only then the Kingdom of God will grow and spread its branches, far and wide, so that birds of the air can take shelter in it (cf. Mt 13:32).

Finally, retreats, charismatic conventions, prayer meetings, exorcism, etc. have brought in a lot of healing, especially inner healing in the lives of hundreds and thousands. Such healings have helped many to return to their faith and to confess Jesus as their personal saviour. Kasper desires that the Church continues her healing ministry even in instances where people, due to lack of faith, fail to acknowledge God's Spirit working in their personal lives.

Concluding Remarks

As a fitting conclusion to the foregoing deliberations, it is good to recapitulate some of the salient features of Jesus' active life and mission on earth. First and foremost, it should be noted that Jesus manifested himself not only in what he spoke: like parables, wisdom sayings and prophetic teachings, but also in what he did: miracles, acts of love and mercy. Jesus' deeds were acts of affection, compassion and warmth, since he acted in the name of God, who is pure love (1 Jn 4:16). Thus both, the words of Jesus and the miracles that he performed were functions of the Kingdom of God, in which God acted in such a way that he entered into contact with humanity, creating history with man. The miracle stories are not just marvellous and exciting events that Jesus performed, but they are related to

[457] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 98.

[458] Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles*, 9.

faith and discipleship which ultimately should enable one to recognise the divine Sonship of Jesus and his works of salvation.

Kasper is clear that any effort or attempt to search for a miracle-free Jesus-tradition or to present the historical Jesus credited without miracles, is totally going to be in vain. People who believed in Jesus' miracles came to trust in God and his providence, and experienced an inner healing and an inner unity of the person. Finally Kasper makes one truth clear: Not the various extraordinary phenomena that Jesus performed, but 'God,' who in Jesus was carrying out his plan for the salvation of mankind and for the world, is of prime importance. Through miracles, Jesus reveals to mankind a new observable reality, understood only by faith, and he also reveals the identity of the one who sent him, God, his Father.

CHAPTER 3
DEATH, RESURRECTION AND THE TITLES OF JESUS
PART I: PASSION AND DEATH OF THE MESSIAH

Introduction

The passion, especially the death of Jesus, is at the heart of the Gospel and of the mystery of salvation. Kasper, as mentioned in the first chapter, is known for his Christology of complementarity, which holds together the earthly Jesus and the resurrected Christ. Although he acknowledges the difference between these two aspects of the mysteries of Jesus, he however, makes the historical aspect of Jesus of Nazareth a crucial element. Jesus' activities, his message, and especially his death receive close attention in Kasper's Christology. He finds an implicit Christology in Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom, his table fellowship and his offering the cup of eschatological blessing in the face of his impending death. The passion and cross of Jesus therefore, enjoy a prominent place in Kasper's Christology.

Crossan, a prominent scholar of the American Jesus Seminar, suggested that most of the Markan Passion narrative was created by Mark on the basis of Scripture.[459] His strained reconstruction of the historical Jesus goes to the extreme of insisting that "Jesus' disciples knew nothing of the death of Jesus, and stitched together the better parts of the Gospels in an inspired burst of spiritual imagination."[460] There are scholars, however, who even argue and consider the entire episode as plausible.

The object of this chapter is to analyse how Kasper views the death of Jesus, and how he elucidates especially the soteriological and eschatological character of Jesus' sacrifice.[461]

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[459] Cf. John Dominic Crossan, *Wer tötete Jesus? Die Ursprünge des christlichen Antisemitismus in den Evangelien* (München: Beck, 1999).

[460] Mark Heim, "Christ Crucified: What does Jesus' Death Matter," *Christian Century* 7 (2001): 13.

[461] For more on trial, passion and death of Jesus see also Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus. Studia Judaica Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Band 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Company, 1961); Joseph Blinzler, *Der Prozeß Jesu*, fourth edition (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969); Geert Van Oyen, *The Trial and the Death of Jesus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006); Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, *Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004); Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988); Hayim Kohen, *Der Prozeß und Tod Jesu aus jüdischer Sicht* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verl., Suhrkamp, 1997); Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der Prozess Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2006); W. Schrage, „Das Verständnis des Todes Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament," in *Das Kreuz Jesu*

3.1 Some Rudimentary Remarks

The Passion of Christ by Mel Gibson, a blockbuster released on March 26, 2004, in the United States, portrayed the last twelve hours of Jesus' earthly life. Though the film was a major commercial hit, Catholic sources, however, have questioned the authenticity of its non-biblical material. The screened version of the film created mixed feelings: profound, accurate, disturbing, a ghastly depiction, horrendous, etc. In spite of these reactions, the film did not lose its significance because it portrayed the death of Jesus as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. The then Pope John Paul II is reported to have said about the film, "It is as it was."[462] However, the film later became highly controversial for depicting extreme violence, concentrating only on the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. It appears that this movie has isolated the events leading up to the passion and death of Jesus and, thereby, obscured the actual message and purpose of Jesus' death.

Why did Jesus die? Why was Jesus killed? Martin Hengel draws attention to this burning issue by asking, "Why did the Messiah have to suffer?"[463] For Kasper, the death of Jesus and the reality of the Cross are the most certain, rudimentary, and well grounded facts that Jesus was a historical person. The Gospel texts and the post-Easter acclamations, even though these slightly vary, serve to support this position.

Evangelist John presents the execution of Jesus on the day of the Passover sacrifice (18:28), but the Synoptics present the Last Supper as a Passover meal, presupposing that the lamb has already been offered in the temple. Many scholars, including Raymond Brown, have plausibly argued that John could be historically correct[464] and that "the Last Supper narrative does not explicitly mention a lamb," and that "an execution of one such on the first day of the feast was inconceivable."[465] It could be well presumed that John

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Christi als Grund des Heils, ed. E. Bizer et al. (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1967); Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011).

[462] Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, "Jesus' Final Week: Collision Course," *Christian Century* 20 (2007): 27.

[463] Joel B. Green, "The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God: Jesus and the Gospel on Messianic Status and Shameful Suffering" *Interpretation* 52, no. 24 (1998): 27.

[464] Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Fourth Gospel*, Vol. II (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1351-1373.

[465] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 372.

probably had theological reasons to place the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29) on Passover (Jn 19:36).[466]

Kasper and many others opine that the rudimentary facts remain undisputed, like the arrest of Jesus, handing over to the Roman Officials, the inquisition, the passion and crucifixion. One could even ask, 'Why was Jesus crucified and not beheaded, since beheading was the prominent form of execution?' Roman citizens were not crucified; instead "they were beheaded."[467] How then could Jesus be condemned to such an ignominious and opprobrious death?

The Romans considered Jesus a provocative figure, a rebel who agitated the people against the Roman authorities. The Jewish leaders, presupposing that Jesus, right from the beginning wanted to earn the title of kingship, conferred on him the provisionary title 'King of the Jews.' Kasper believes that the Romans entirely misread Jesus' socio-spiritual engagement, mistaking it for a political one and attributes this misconception of the Roman soldiers to their incapacity in differentiating theology from politics, and civil from criminal cases. He puts it tersely:

> The conclusion is often drawn from this that Jesus was a guerrilla leader of the Zealot type. But the fundamental differences between Jesus and the Zealots make this view quite untenable. Moreover, in the unstable political climate of Palestine of the time, the Romans were suspicious of any sort of mass organization; Roman soldiers were probably incapable of making precise theological distinctions.[468]

Jesus' death was thus considered "both the product of societal structures of evil and voluntary acts of human beings."[469] Kasper adds another very essential factor: the reality of the saving act of God through the voluntary self-sacrifice by his son, Jesus. Even

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[466] Kasper speaking about Johannine account questions further the possibility of the Sanhedrin meeting together on such solemn Jewish feast day, the armed arrest party (cf. Mk 14:43), the return of Simon of Cyrene from work in the fields (cf. Mk 15:21) etc., to support the view that Jesus died on the day before the Passover feast, i.e., fourteenth Nisan. Based on these facts and astrological calculations, Kasper suggests April 7, AD 30 as the probable date of Jesus' death.

[467] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 113. Crucifixion was indeed a cruel death penalty which was reserved only for slaves and rebels; a disdain, an act of derision, a parody. Romans didn't even want to discuss this theme in their elite gatherings.

[468] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 113.

[469] Walter Harrelson, "Protestant Understanding of the Passion," in *Pondering the Passion: What's at Stake for Christians and Jews*? ed. Philip A. Cunningham (UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 44.

though several conflicts during the ministry of Jesus were quite sufficient for Jesus to expect an untimely death, Kasper however, emphasises the eschatological dimension of the death of Jesus.

3.1.1 How did Jesus see his Death?

Among the biblical scholars there are a few who criticise the historicity of the 'trial' of Jesus,[470] and some others who argue against its authenticity think, that it either inconclusive or fallacious.[471] Kasper however admits that a proper trial did take place which eventually sentenced Jesus to death on the cross.[472] Events, causes and legal procedures leading to the crucifixion of Jesus are evident from the Scripture, and there also exist a myriad of commentaries on these topics from scholarly authors.[473]

Kasper elucidates two important issues seen in the life of Jesus that convened the Council (cf. Mk 14:53-65; Mt 26:57-68; Lk 22:66-71; Jn 18:12-14, 19-24) and conflagrated the entire session. The first was the Messiah issue and the second, Jesus' challenge to rebuild the destroyed temple in three days. When the entire scene is minutely examined (Mt 26:57-68), indications of the Council's failure in having proper judicial procedures are conspicuous. Probably a couple of requirements were ignored and a few among them deliberately overlooked.[474] Kasper also draws a significant point from the title of Jesus on the cross, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,' which shows that Jesus was understood as a political leader and thus the judgement of his condemnation also was brought about

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[470] Cf. Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*; idem, "The Trial of Jesus and the Competence of the Sanhedrin" *New Testament Studies* X, no. 4 (1964): 494-499; Haim Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (New York: KTAV, 1967), 98.

[471] Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul and Judaism*, trans. Edward Schroeder (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 84f; B. Corley, "Trial of Jesus" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 841-854.

[472] By 'proper trial' Kasper means that this trial as an event, as a fact really took place, but he seriously questions the authenticity of the procedure and the fairness of the judgement arrived.

[473] For further reading see, Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd, ed., *The Trial and the Death of Jesus. Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006); Joel B. Green and John T. Carroll, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2011); Stephen J. Patterson, *Beyond the Passion: Rethinking the Death and Life of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publ., 2004); Jörg Frey und Jens Schröter, ed., *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, 2. Auflage (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Gerhard Barth, *Der Tod Jesu Christi im Verständnis des Neuen Testaments* (Neukirchlichen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verl., 1992); Klaus Berger, *Wozu ist Jesus am Kreuz gestorben*? 1 Auflage (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus, 2001).

[474] Cf. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 647-648.

on political grounds.[475] On the other hand, Nicholas Thomas Wright, a leading British New Testament Scholar, suggests that Jesus' accusers handed over Jesus to the Roman authorities and Pilate passed the death sentence, but neither Jewish nor Roman authorities regarded Jesus as guilty.[476]

3.1.1.1 Entry into Jerusalem

A reconstruction of the events that led directly to Jesus' death in Jerusalem is seemingly difficult because even "the oldest source, Mk 11-15, is a mixture of accurate but very brief reports of what took place, and creative writing, most of which was produced to fill gaps in Mark's knowledge."[477] Bultmann makes a critical analysis of the Lucan text 13:31-33 in which Jesus laments over Jerusalem. It appears that for Jesus, v. 33 would mean a resigned reply to the Pharisees who warn him about Herod's plot to kill him.[478] Bornkamm highlighted the significance of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem. He states:

> Jesus' decision to go to Jerusalem was undoubtedly a turning point in Jesus' life… It appears that way according to the repeated prophecies of suffering and resurrection (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f). They were clearly first formulated in retrospect in view of the passion, demonstrating Jesus' miraculous knowledge of future events… The third prophecy in particular has been fashioned as a complete summary of the passion and Easter story.[479]

According to Kasper, Jesus was clear that the road to Jerusalem would lead to conflicts, and therefore, Jesus had to surmise with the possibility of his own violent end. It was actually Albert Schweitzer who suggested two options to help understand the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem: Jesus went to Jerusalem, either to work there or to die, and Schweitzer himself subscribes to the latter.[480] Though there are numerous interpretations

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[475] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 234. Kasper further maintains that Jesus, through his life and works might have apparently created reasons for such misunderstandings. Hence, it is justified to a certain extent, that many believed Jesus to be political rebel.

[476] Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 543-547. It could be said that self-interest played a predominant role in the crucifixion of Jesus.

[477] Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth: An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching* (New York: T and T Clark, 2010), 401.

[478] Cf. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 35.

[479] Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 154.

[480] Cf. Schweitzer, *The Quest of Historical Jesus*, 389. The followers of Schweitzer include John C. O'Neil, *Messiah*: *Six Lectures on the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cochrane Press, 1980), see specially chapter 4;

as regards Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his impending death, the intention of Jesus is the key-factor of Kasper's entire christological thinking. The fact that Jesus really intended to die in the fashion that he actually did, is for Kasper, disputable. However, the frequent conflicts in the life of Jesus were "quite sufficient for him to have expected to die."[481]

3.1.1.2 The Messianic Claims

Jesus is said to have stirred up the Jewish people through his messianic claims. Although, Jesus' messiahship was evidently not kingship in a political sense, the Jews falsely understood it as political. As a matter of fact, Schneider believes, that "it is they themselves who not only approve of uproar (Lk 23: 18f, 25) but even aroused it (Acts 13:50; 14:19; 17:5-8, 13; 18:12-17; 21:27)."[482] The claim to be the Messiah, even if Jesus had deliberately made it, contends E. P. Sanders, "would not seem to be an indictable offence (unless construed, as some have suggested, as a challenge to Rome). The claim to be the Son of man, or to know that he is coming, is not blasphemy."[483] Kasper presumes that the authorities probably found in Jesus' words a claim of divinity which they, mistakenly, understood as blasphemy. Scholars also argue that Jesus must have gathered sufficient support that offered a real threat to the Roman government, so that they had to execute him.[484] Kasper, as said earlier, emphasises the incapacity of the Roman soldiers of making precise theological distinctions.[485]

Kasper, like other scholars, is also of the opinion that Jesus being a Jew had not the slightest intention of doing away with the Jewish religion and replacing another in its place.[486] Merkel notes that "if Jesus lived in harmony with his contemporaries, then the reason for his violent end must have been from his political activity. Accordingly, from

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Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1994), 90; Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1995), 72; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 553-554.

[481] Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 401.

[482] Gerhard Schneider, "The Political Charge against Jesus (Luke 23:2)" in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 413-414.

[483] Ed Parish Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 55; idem, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1990) 64; Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 108.

[484] Cf. A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1976), 2-3

[485] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 113.

[486] Cf. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 17.

Reimarus to R. Eisler, down to S. G. F. Brandon, Jesus has again and again been placed in the company of Zealot resistance fighters."[487] This affinity, however, has also been questioned and it has been proposed that there was an unbridgeable gulf between two.[488] As Moltmann understands it, this was a conflict between God and gods, that is, between the God that Jesus preached as his Father, and the god "understood in the law and tradition and was perceived by the guardians of the law."[489] It could be concluded that Jesus was arrested and accused not because he was a prophet and claimed to be one, but because he was judged to be a 'false prophet.'[490]

3.1.1.3 Cleansing of the Temple

Kasper sees the 'temple-cleansing act' by Jesus (Jn 2:13-21) as another cause that agitated the Jews. He also considers this to be a crucial element as regards the historical setting of the passion and death of Jesus is concerned. The temple took a very prominent place in the life of the Jews, who considered themselves a faithful and worshipping community. Hence, there are a few scholars who argue on this ground, that it is equally probable that Jesus would not have been killed for his teaching or behaviour, in relation to the law.[491] However, according to John Clabeaux, most historians see "Jesus' rather violent activity in the temple (in Mk 11:15-19 and parallels) as sufficient reason to raise the ire of both the Romans and the temple authorities."[492] Kasper opines that the moment Jesus decided to execute the cleansing of the temple, Jesus might have been convinced that he was risking his life. Therefore, Kasper believes that Jesus' action in the temple directly led to his death. He further writes:

> Jesus can in no sense be said to have gone unsuspectingly to Jerusalem, but it is uncertain whether he went there with the firm intention of confronting his people with his message and forcing them to make a last-minute decision (cf. Lk 19.11; 24.21; Acts 1.6)… It is

[487] Helmut Merkel, "The Opposition between Jesus and Judaism," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 129. See also Martin Hengel, *War Jesus Revolutionär*? (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1970).

[488] Cf. Hengel, *War Jesus Revolutionär*?; O. Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

[489] Moltmann, *The Crucified* God, 128-129.

[490] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 77.

[491] Cf. Gerard Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1995), 27, 31.

[492] John Clabeaux, "Why was Jesus Executed? History and Faith" in *Pondering the Passion* ed. Philip A. Cunningham (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 31.

> nevertheless clear that his followers made messianic proclamations in Jerusalem (Mk 11.7ff par.) which caused a considerable stir, perhaps even a popular disturbance… We should probably see the cleansing of the Temple as a prophetic symbolic action, rooted in Old Testament expectations (Is 56.7; Jer 7.11), and symbolizing the dawn of the eschatological age, the end of the old Temple and the start of a new one.[493]

The Passion Narratives in the Gospels however emphasise, that Jesus died for "religious reasons" and not "political ones."[494] Sanders observes that Jesus came to his death because of his "threatening gesture" and "threatening statement, against the temple." Further, Sanders maintains that although Jesus sought no secular kingship, his "physical demonstration" in the temple made him appear as a hostile threat to the Jewish leadership and to the Romans.[495] Jesus was now the scapegoat, entangled between the two so-called super powers and in the words of Kasper: "Jesus was caught between millstones of power. Misunderstanding, cowardice, hatred, lies, intrigues and emotions brought him to destruction."[496]

Kasper tries to highlight the continuity of Jesus' life and mission. Hence, Jesus' death, according to Kasper, is not just doing away of the man Jesus by the Jews and Romans, but actually the saving act of God and Jesus' voluntary self-sacrifice. In order to rightly understand the eschatological and the soteriological perspectives of Jesus' death, one needs to also consider the Last Supper event, since; these perspectives are in some way foreshadowed at the table fellowship.

3.1.1.4 The Last Supper: Jesus Interprets His Death

Meal, in the gospels, is not only a sign of fellowship and community, but also an essential symbol of election, forgiveness and eschatological blessings.[497] Kasper identifies an inter-relationship between meals, the death of Jesus and the coming of the Kingdom of God

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[493] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 117; Bernard P. Prusak, "Jews and the Death of Jesus in Post-Vatican II Christologies" in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 28, no. 4 (1991): 587.

[494] Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 117.

[495] Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 270-293, 294-318.

[496] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 114.

[497] Kasper, quoting Luke 22:16 and 18 considers the last supper not only as a meal at the table, but also as a symbolic foretaste of the eschatological blessings that would come along with the Kingdom of God.

because, "Jesus sees the coming of the Kingdom to be symbolised by a meal and he celebrates it in an anticipatory manner at meals."[498] The Eucharist, which Jesus instituted during the Last Supper, is meant to serve and reinforce the identity and unity of the participating, and hence, "food and instruction are *interchangeable* symbols, *replicating* each other… a meal is a perfect setting for teaching."[499]

Kasper notes that "at the Last Supper Jesus did not merely take up pre-existing Jewish table customs; rather, while doing that, he altered and accented them anew."[500] The language that Jesus uses at the Last Supper and his sayings, clearly indicate an element of sacrifice. In this God-willed drama Jesus is the main protagonist. The use of "blood poured out for many" (Mk 14:24) probably results from a combination of the terminologies of sacrifice with the poem about the suffering servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53.[501] The Last Supper brought Jesus' own kingdom-movement to its climax, indicating that the new exodus and all that it meant was happening in and through Jesus himself.[502] Wright opines:

> The words of Jesus at the supper would therefore have been seen, not only with later hindsight, but at the time, as performing a similar function. They would have been understood as reinterpreting the meal in relation to himself, claiming that the kingdom-events about to occur were the climax of the long history which looked back to the exodus from Egypt as its formative movement.[503]

It is evident that the words of Jesus at the Last Supper like flesh, blood, poured out, etc., did allude to sacrificial terminology, but however, crucifixion itself technically required no blood.[504] After partaking of the cup, Jesus utters what resembles a traditional vow of abstention (cf. Num 6:4; 30:2), in this case, vowing not to drink wine until the coming of

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[498] Walter Kasper, "The Unity and Multiplicity of Aspects in the Eucharist" *Communio* 12 (Summer, 1985): 118.

[499] Jerome Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 11.

[500] Kasper, "The Unity and Multiplicity of Aspects in the Eucharist," 116.

[501] See Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, fourth revised edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967), 218.

[502] Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 554 – 559.

[503] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 559. Cf. also Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1996), 49-50 and Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 627-644.

[504] Romans sometimes fixed criminals to crosses with rope. See Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 56 and 220-222.

his reign.[505] Jesus' expression, "Truly I tell you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God (Mk 14:25)… place Jesus' death in the light of the coming Kingdom of God, they distinguish Jesus and his destiny from that of the disciples."[506] Finally, the cup of wine symbolising the blood of Jesus again seems to be highlighting the sacrificial and redemptive significance of his forthcoming death, akin to the redemption of Israel.[507]

The words at the Last Supper somehow make explicit what is implicit in the Passover setting. Jesus' coming death will effect the renewal of the covenant, that is, the great return from exile for which Israel had longed.[508] Kasper maintains that these sayings of Jesus and his symbolic actions make sense only if one postulates the eschatological and apocalyptic context of Jesus' commitment. However, according to Kasper, in the final analysis, "Jesus' Last Supper is without analogy, a phenomenon *sui generis* which explodes all current categories."[509]

3.1.2 The Crucifixion: A Glance at its Practice

Kasper opined that the entire 'Golgotha episode' is to be seen through the eyes of the Father, who was desired to redeem the whole humanity from sin and death. The cross, he observes, seems to be an absurdity, but Catholic theology is the theology of the cross, an adequate form of God's presence.[510]

There is some speculation that the Romans learned the art of crucifixion, a practised punishment during the Roman regime, "from the Carthaginians during the Punic

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[505] See Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 182-185; Werner George Kümmel, *Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 23*: Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 31.

[506] Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 160.

[507] Cf. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 432, 434.

[508] Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 560. Also the phrase here 'blood of the covenant,' which occurs in some form in all the accounts, echoes Exodus 24:8, in which Moses established the first covenant with the people at Mount Sinai Ex 24:6-8

[509] Kasper, "The Unity and Multiplicity of Aspects in the Eucharist," 117. See also Johannes Betz, „Eucharistie als zentrales Mysterium" in *Mysterium Salutis*, ed. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer, Vol. IV/2 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1973), 193ff.

[510] Cf. Kasper, „Gottes gegenwart in Jesus Christus," 325-326.

Wars."[511] Though such punishment was "cruel, humiliating, and shameful, but it was not unusual,"[512] although it offended the aesthetic sensibilities of the Roman world. Jesus, through his crucifixion, shared the fate of his oppressed and subjugated people.[513] Kasper does not categorically state that the Jews directly crucified Jesus, but in fact he opines that it was the Romans. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the religious leaders of Israel (the chief priests, scribes and elders) were also responsible for Jesus' crucifixion.

People who ask questions like: 'Why was Jesus crucified? What was the need of his execution? Why such a capital punishment?' are called to find consolation in the words of St. Paul: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). Kasper argues that no other biblical text can sum up the reason for the entire passion and death of Jesus. Christian theology believes that God demanded the sacrificial death of his only beloved Son as a ransom for the sins of humanity.

Kasper formulates the question concerning Jesus' death and redemption more precisely: "Can we reconcile with the belief that it is only through the death of Jesus that God brings about the salvation of men?"[514] To answer this question, one has to understand the mind of Jesus in the background of his teachings and then trace what actually happened. Nicholas Wright tries to argue that Jesus' death was in that sense an accident, having nothing to do with the aims and agendas that he had been pursuing.[515] But one cannot subscribe to the opinion of Wright, neither would Kasper. It is clear that Jesus, like the prophets of the Old Testament, desired to do the will of God, and eventually, had to pay the price for it through his passion and death.

There are good reasons to believe, that although Jesus' accusers handed over Jesus to Pilate, who in turn executed Jesus on charges of blasphemy, "both parties knew that he

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[511] Claudia Setzer, "The Jews under Roman Rule" in *Pondering the Passion*, ed. Philip A. Cunningham (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 11. Punic wars were a series of three wars fought between Rome and Carthage from 264 BC to 146 BC (264-241; 218-201; 149-146).

[512] Christopher Bryan, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

[513] Further John 18:13 "it is not lawful for us to put any man to death" also explains clearly Jesus' death at the hands of the Romans and not at the hands of the Jews. For more additional and elaborate information see also Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Vol II; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); and E. Mary Smallwood, *Jesus under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

[514] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 121. If this question is answered in the positive, then the works and deeds of Jesus during his public ministry are automatically devalued. Kasper sees a close connection between the death of Jesus and the different events that led to the tragic event of crucifixion.

[515] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 540-552.

was not guilty of it, or not in any straightforward sense."[516] It is almost certain that, "Jesus' kingdom-preaching must have carried, to all his hearers, some revolutionary sense."[517] Kasper, as mentioned earlier, opines that Jesus was completely misunderstood in four ways: he was considered to be a false prophet, leading the people of Israel astray; speculated to be a political liability, suspected of devising an organised military revolt, and was declared to be a blasphemer, who placed himself alongside the god of Israel.

Finally, to what extent Jesus was aware of his death and saw it as a source of salvation, is a disputed issue even among exegetes and theologians. But for Kasper, Jesus' conviction that his death had a meaning in God's design seems to be incontrovertible. He is convinced that it is through Jesus Christ that man can nevertheless come to know both, God and misery. Kasper maintains that, it is this "Jesus of Nazareth, as someone who was tortured, mocked, cursed, and put to death though innocent, is the symbol of all those who have been 'humiliated and insulted.'"[518] Kasper also understands the theology of the cross in a similar way. The cross, which was considered as a humiliating object and as having the lowest value, attains through the death of Jesus, a sublime meaning and the highest value.[519]

3.1.3 The Meaning and Significance of Psalm 22

In the Christology of Kasper, the cry of Jesus on the Cross has a significant importance. He has tired to closely analyse this cry of Jesus and answer critical questions like: Did Jesus really experience a situation of abandonment? Was Jesus fighting a losing battle? How is the death of Jesus understood by God? These questions, Kasper believes, could be answered if the Golgotha episode, including the cry of Jesus, is critically analysed.

The words in the cry of abandonment from Psalm 22:1 (Psalm of the righteous sufferer), "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" intensify the narrative of Jesus' crucifixion. According to Brown, one of the oldest discernible Christian traditions is that, "Jesus' citation of Ps 22:1-2 seems to have been known by all the evangelists (even if two

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[516] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 544. Sanders also subscribes to this thinking in his book, *Jesus and Judaism*, 294 f.

[517] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 544.

[518] Walter Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, trans. Robert Nowell (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 38-39

[519] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 235.

did not reproduce it)."[520] Mark seems to further escalate "the tragic and chilling tenor of the crucifixion scene (15:24-39) by interspersing verses from Ps 22 in reverse order from their original context."[521]

Jeremias contends that Jesus, being a Jew, was "fond of praying in the words of the Psalter" [522] and hence the cry from the cross could have hardly been fabricated by the early Christians to present Jesus' helplessness and his alienation from God. It is believed that Jesus made use of Psalms quite often and it was this psalm of lament that provided him with one of the last utterances: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"[523]

Kasper's interest is to draw attention to how well the psalm in its entirety fits the occasion. He opines that Jesus' cry of abandonment, in a certain way seems to meet the criterion of embarrassment. Analysing this cry of Jesus, Kasper brings to the forefront the positive elements hidden in it. He understands these words of Jesus as the cry of a righteous sufferer, expressing hope in the final victory and the coming of the final Kingdom of God, and not as Jesus' failure in realising the divine plan. This cry therefore, was directed to God, whom Jesus called 'my Father.' Kasper's formulation is exquisite.

> *Er hat das unergründliche Geheimnis Gottes und seines Willens erfahren. Aber er hat diese Nacht im Glauben ausgehalten. So ist er in dieser äußersten Leere zur Hohlform für Gottes Fülle geworden. Sein Tod ist zum Ort des Lebens geworden. Sein Tod wurde so zur anderen Seite des Kommens der Herrschaft Gottes in der Liebe.*[524]

> Jesus experienced the unfathomable mystery of God and his will, but he endured this darkness in faith. This extremity of emptiness enabled him to become the vessel of God's fullness. His death became the source of life. It became the other side of the coming of the Kingdom of God – its coming in love.[525]

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[520] Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Vol II, 1085.

[521] Cf. Vernon K. Robbins, "The Reversed Contextualization of Psalm 22 in the Markan Crucifixion: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, Vol II, ed. C. M. Tuckett and F. Van Segbroeck (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1179-1180.

[522] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 189.

[523] Psalm 22:1; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34. Lindars is of the opinion that the genuineness of this saying, as actually spoken by Jesus, can hardly be disputed. For detailed analysis see B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 89.

[524] Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, 185-186. See also Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 446-447.

[525] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 118-119.

Christian theology has found great significance in the use of Psalm 22 and 69 in the Passion Narrative, contemplating how Jesus had fully embraced human suffering. Furthermore, "the cry does not imply a collapse of faith in what Jesus had already prophesied; 'my God' rather implies continuing trust."[526] Neither for the Gospels nor necessarily for their sources, "do Jesus' abandonment and despairing 'God-forsakenness' necessarily imply doubt of ultimate triumph."[527] Finally, Jesus 'gave up his spirit' simply implies that he died, but Kasper emphasises that it also implies an element of his choice (cf. Jn 10:18; Mk 10:45).

3.1.4 The Death of Jesus in the Christology of Kasper

Good historical reasons exist for supposing that Jesus foresaw his imminent martyrdom, and probably even viewed it as part of his mission.[528] Kasper, analysing the various prophesies of the passion of Jesus, not only shows that Jesus had foreknowledge of his impending death, but also stresses "the voluntary character of his acceptance of his fate."[529] Jesus used a general statement about prophets to indicate that he would not be caught by Herod, but rather would die like the other prophets in Jerusalem (Lk 13:33). Jesus told many parables relating to the Kingdom of God, but duing his last days the parables that he narrated, were simple parables having a moral, unlike the earlier ones which contained the secret of the Kingdom. Schweitzer indicates that since the last prophecies of Jesus contain secret of his passion, there seem to exist a mysterious connection between the Passion and the coming of the Kingdom. Schweitzer opines that "the secret of the Passion takes up, therefore, the secret of the Kingdom of God."[530]

Kasper opines that Jesus rarely spoke about his impending passion, especially in public. This indicates that Jesus focused his attention more on the establishment of God's reign during his public appearances. Martin Hengel puts it: "In the first place he sought to announce the dawn of the kingdom of God, and in the face of this task his own fate

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[526] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 130.

[527] Werner H. Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 81. Also cf. his "The Hour of the Son of Man and the Temptation of the Disciples (Mark 14:32-42)," in *The Passion in Mark: Studies in Mark 14-16*, ed. Werner H. Kelber (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 41-60.

[528] Cf. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Vol. II, 1468-1491.

[529] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 114.

[530] Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 73.

retreated into the background."[531] Though the prediction of the passion and the death of Jesus were intelligible, even his "disciples misunderstood such clear teaching (eg. Mk 8:32)… This could imply that they interpreted these prophecies in the way oracles in the ancient Mediterranean were often construed, on the principle that they often appeared obscure until fulfilment."[532] That Jesus expected his execution seems to be clear from these discussions, although according to Kasper and many scholars, the question of how Jesus saw his impending death appears to be a challenging interpretation. Doss has meaningfully summed up Kasper's understanding of Jesus' death as follows:

> The Son filled with God's Spirit becomes in freedom an historical figure through which the Son gives himself to the Father. In the total surrendering of the Son on the Cross the Spirit is released from his particular historical figure and thus Jesus' death and resurrection mediate the coming of the Spirit. Jesus Christ, who in the Spirit is in person the mediator between God and man, becomes in the Spirit the universal mediator of salvation.[533]

Kasper presumes that Jesus' symbolic actions at the Last Supper, in the temple cleansing act and especially his sayings, collectively point out to one particular direction. He also maintains that Jesus knew that through his death he would be the means of the kingdom's coming, once and for all. Jesus seems to have understood his own clashes with Israel's actual and self-appointed rulers and guardians of tradition as part of such a battle.[534]

Kasper further tries to prove how in and through the death of Jesus on the cross, both, the commandment of love as well as the sacrificial nature reach their climax. He undoubtedly maintains that Jesus submitted himself to such abuse without offering any resistance although he could, and this shows that power has no function in the Kingdom that Jesus preached. Jesus' consciousness and conviction that he has come to save the world impels and incentivises Jesus to accept fully the impact of his bodily death.

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[531] Martin Hengel, *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1981), 34.

[532] Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 289.

[533] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 252. Cf. Jn 16:7; 20:22; Doss, *Christ in the Spirit*, 130. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik: Schau der Gestalt*, Band I (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verl., 1961).

[534] Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 564-565.

3.1.4.1 Eschatological Perspective of Jesus' Sacrifice

Kasper identifies the eschatological perspective of Jesus' death in the last supper passage, especially in the words of Jesus himself at the table (cf. Mk 14:17-25; also see 1 Cor 11:23-25).[535] The eschatological citation is well articulated also by St. Paul when he writes, "For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). Solemnly declaring, that he will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when he drinks it anew in the Kingdom of God (Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18), "Jesus prefaces the whole meal."[536] This signals that "his communion with his disciple is now ending," and "will only be renewed with the visible inbreaking of the kingdom of God."[537] Moltmann righty explains: If Jesus was a merely historical person, the world would have long forgotten him, because his message had been contradicted by his own death. Since his proclamations have an eschatological relevance and bearing, Jesus becomes a mystery and a question for every new age. Hence, "the resurrection of Jesus from the dead by God does not speak the 'language of facts,' but only the language of faith and hope, that is, the 'language of promise.'"[538] When one attempts to answer the questions concerning Jesus' passion and death, one is faced with a lot of problems as far as the internal intricacies are concerned.

According to Kasper, the Gospel narratives lead to a firm conclusion that Jesus indubitably had a precognition about his impending death. Several passages found in the Gospel support this proposition like: reference to the reports of the violent deaths of the prophets (Lk 11:49f.), Jesus is asked to leave the place and escape from Herod's wrath (Lk 13:31-33), Jesus is seen preparing his disciples to expect some challenging days in the near future (Lk 6:22); and finally, Jesus predicts his own passion and death (Mk 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:33-34). Analysing these instances, Kasper is very much assertive that this

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[535] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 117. See also Heinz Schürmann, *Der Paschamahlbericht* Lk 22, (7-14) 15-18 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1953); Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth*; Paul Neuenzeit, *Das Herrenmahl: Studien zur paulinischen Eucharistieauffassung* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1960).

[536] Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:216.

[537] Hans Schwarz, *Christology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 245.

[538] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 173. Also see 166-178.

foreknowledge stresses 'the voluntary character' of Jesus' 'acceptance of his fate,' and he contends that Jesus' passion is a "divinely ordained necessity."[539]

Kasper opines that the Passion tradition in no way can be doubted since they are very close to the historical events, even if some details may arouse uncertainty. These have different theological interests while interpreting the Passion in the light of the Resurrection.[540] Jesus, the suffering-servant, maintains Kasper, brings to fulfilment the Old Testament Prophecies and Jesus, being the Just One, through his own unjust sufferings, makes the final act of love and service, dedicating his life totally for others.

Kasper seems to be in agreement with Albert Schweitzer, who is of the opinion that, on the one hand, the coming of the Kingdom of God and the trials of the eschatological or last times, and on the other hand, the coming of the Messiah and the messianic age of sufferings, cannot be separated.[541] Both, Kasper and Schweitzer, seem to be convinced, that Jesus saw sufferings and trials as an essential character of the Kingdom of God. Thus, suffering and trials become a part of Jesus' preaching as they belong to God's Kingdom, and since Jesus himself is the 'Kingdom,' the '*auto-basileia*,' he himself is subject to suffering. That brings one to a probable certainty, that Jesus became eventually conscious of the reality of passion and death. In the words of Kasper himself, "This death is the form in which the reign of God becomes a reality under the conditions of the

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[539] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 114. See Hans Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verl., 1970); George Strecker, „Die Leidens- und Auferstehungsvoraussagen in Markusevangelium (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34)," *ZThK* 64 (1967): 16-39.

[540] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 115. But there are considerable arguments from theologians who find the passion and death of Jesus a confusion. Wrede maintained that the earthly life of Jesus was un-Messianic and hence it is quite difficult to explain why Jesus, at his crucifixion, was called 'King of the Jews' and also the would-be Messiah of Israel. Bultmann reasons that the crucifixion of Jesus was the outcome of political misunderstanding and had nothing to do with the concept of salvation. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*. Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Jahrgang 1960, 3. Abhandlung (Heidelberg: Winter, 1960), 11-12. Further Willi Marxsen has a similar opinion as even he argues that neither the death of Jesus had any saving value nor his crucifixion was in any sense a saving event. See Willi Marxsen, „Erwägungen zum Problem des verkündigten Kreuzes," in *Der Exeget als Theologe: Vorträge zum Neuen Testament*, Willi Marxsen (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1968), 160-170. See also Heinz Schürmann, „Wie hat Jesus seinen Tod verstanden? Eine methodologische Besinnung," in *Orientierung an Jesus*, ed. Paul Hoffmann (Freiburg: Herder, 1973).

[541] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 116. Also see Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*. See specially chapter IX, *The Secret of the Passion* (137-159), in which Schweitzer discusses the human element in the secret of Jesus' passion.

present aeon; it is the form in which the reign of God comes to pass in human weakness, riches in poverty, love in abandonment, fullness in emptiness, life in death."[542]

Kasper further explains the tragic fate of Jesus as something that no other human being has undergone in the world. But the faith and trust of Jesus in his Father was firmly anchored and this gave him the inner strength to undergo this crucial phase of darkness and abandonment. Kasper, like St. Paul makes it clear that Jesus on the cross, taking the form of a servant emptied himself and as a result of this self-emptying Jesus could become the vessel of God's goodness and love for the world. According to Kasper, the Kingdom of God now entered mightily in the world, and it was a Kingdom of love.[543]

For Kasper, God's reign, both manifests God's kingship and realises humanity's desire and hopes. God's reign bestows a new beginning on humanity that only God can give, and it fulfils human life. As mentioned earlier, in Kasper's view, "the coming of God's kingdom is solely God's action, but its realisation does not exclude cooperative human action."[544] The death of Jesus, in the words of Kasper is, "the final spelling out of the only thing he was interested in, the coming of God's eschatological rule."[545]

3.1.4.2 Soteriological Perspective of Jesus' Sacrifice

Kasper attempts to determine the central place the death of Jesus occupies in the salvation history. It can be certainly maintained that Jesus' death is viewed as a divine necessity: 'the Christ must suffer' (cf. Lk 24:26) and further Mark uses the word 'necessary' (8:31). What is of particular significance is that the death of Jesus is seen as the fulfilment of Scripture, which has a preordained place in God's plan of salvation. Kasper maintains that Jesus' death is not to be understood as Jewish conspiracy or the result of evil planning, but ultimately as God's will, calling upon Jesus to accept this challenge. Luke 9:51 is very significant here since it depicts Jesus as 'having made a firm resolve' to go to Jerusalem because, 'the days of his taking up drew near,' which is a clear indication that Jesus is in full control of all events relating to his passion.

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[542] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 172.

[543] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 118-119.

[544] Cf. McMichael, *Walter Kasper's Response to Modern Atheism*, 82; See also Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 118-130.

[545] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 119.

Kasper, on the one hand, clearly states that Jesus died as a result of what he did and taught (establishment of the Kingdom of God), and also because of the manner in which he challenged his contemporaries. On the other hand, Kasper also has recourse to Scripture text that clearly asserts the purpose of Jesus' sacrificial death: "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3), a text that discloses and authenticates that Christ, the embodiment of God's love, became human, suffered and died, evidencing God's love for the entire universe. Kasper further asserts that "the *basileia* message of Jesus and a soteriological understanding of his death are in no way exclusive of one another."[546]

Christian Soteriology teaches that salvation is an act of divine providence, where God saves people from death, providing them eternal life. This is made possible by the incarnation, life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son. This saving act of God through Jesus is also referred to as 'atonement,' 'ransom,' 'redemption,' 'reconciliation,' and 'sanctification.' However, Anselm of Canterbury rejects the notion of 'ransom' and prefers to use 'satisfaction,' a term in which he proposes that the sinful humanity had offended God's honour, and thus, humanity was in need of salvation from divine punishment for the committed offences.[547] However, according to Kasper, Scripture seeks or makes no attempt to grasp the picture of the reality of salvation in just a single concept that is abstract. Kasper himself formulates salvation as:

> When scripture talks about grace and salvation it uses a whole multitude of concepts and images to define the reality which is salvation from the largest possible number of positions: life, light, peace, freedom, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, redemption, kingdom, love, hope, joy, and so on.[548]

The use and understanding of the word 'salvation' is often two-fold. On the one hand, it denotes salvation from some drastic, painful, pathetic and helpless situation, and on the other hand, it is a salvation to some new and transformed situation. According to Kasper,

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[546] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 172.

[547] Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo* (Oxford and London: John Henry and James Parker, 1865). See also the English translation, *Why God Became Man*? trans. J. M. Colleran (Albany: Magi Books, 1969). In this famous book Anselm formulates his satisfaction theory of the atonement arguing that only human beings can make recompense for human sins against God and in our case, this being impossible for any human being, such an atonement could only be made by God.

[548] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 116-117.

in the given context, it is salvation from sin and death to eternal life, God seeking and saving the lost and placing humanity under the continuity of redemption and reconciliation. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI makes an important observation of how this reconciliation actually takes place in a reversed direction. The elements that distort the image of God and his created world, like sin, evil, injustice which exist to date, are to be addressed and correspondingly dealt with. But in this case, God, without demanding anything from humanity, in the person of Jesus "himself becomes the locus of reconciliation… grants his infinite purity to the world… restores justice through the greatness of his love, which, through suffering, transforms the darkness."[549]

Kasper opines that theologians of all periods have had difficulties in understanding what happened to Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, in the categories available to them.[550] He also identifies this difficulty especially in the writings of the scholars of the New Testament.[551] Kasper meaningfully sums up the reality of salvation:

> For us, therefore, the reality of salvation consists in taking hold in faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, accepting it and living by it. Faith… is the power given to us by the love of God which comes to us in Jesus Christ to re-direct our lives towards God and our fellow men. This faith, in the sense of admission into Jesus' innermost attitude to God and other people, is the reality of salvation.[552]

For Karl Rahner, the salvific death of Jesus becomes clear only when one has in mind a prior concept of "*hypostatic union*."[553] Death, for Rahner, is an act of the entire person, which is both active and passive, and in which a person surrenders his entire life to God.

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[549] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 232.

[550] Cf. Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 128-129. Here Kasper makes a brief reference to the positions of the Greek Fathers who see the salvation brought by Jesus as the overcoming of subjection of death by divinization; to Anselm of Canterbury's theory of satisfaction which became firmly fixed in Western theology, treating redemption as the restoration of a great order of justice embracing both God and man; and finally also to Thomas Aquinas who makes a special reference to the obedient love of Jesus which reached its final fulfilment in the cross, sacrifice of his life to the Father, and to the service of man.

[551] For the interpretation of Jesus' death and its role in salvation cf. H. Conzelmann, E. Flessemann van Leer, E. Haenchen, E. Käsemann und E. Lohse, *Zur Bedeutung des Todes Jesu. Exegetische Beiträge* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1967); E. Biser, W. Fürst, J. F. G. Göters, W. Kreck und W. Schrage, *Das Kreuz Jesu Christi als Grund des Heils* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1967); F. Viering, *Der Kreuzestod Jesu: Interpretation eines theologischen Gutachtens* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), Hans Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Düsseldorf, Patmos Verl., 1970).

[552] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 130.

[553] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 305.

It is also a personal act of freedom, a decision, "an act *par excellence* in which the finally, definitively and irrevocably are determined."[554] Rahner explains this in the context of Anselm's theory of redemption. As per Anselm, death is purely a passive event, and hence, "Jesus' redemptive act consists only in his acceptance and surrender to sufferings and death that caused his death, and not in death as such."[555] Death, for Rahner, is the act *par excellence* where freedom is consummated and only in death does a moral action become definitive. Jesus surrenders himself entirely to his Father through such a redemptive death and saves humanity.[556] In this crucial "moment of being abandoned," Jesus does not abandon God; instead "he surrenders his all to the Father."[557] Only in his death, Rahner opines, Jesus establishes an open, real and ontological relationship to the world, to all men and women.

Hans Urs von Balthasar tries to explains the salvific nature of the death of Jesus by referring to Jesus' descent into the lower region, a point most distant from God. Jesus disappears into the region of utter lost-ness, the deepest niches of human darkness, the realm of God-forsakenness and Godlessness, *hell*.[558] This descent of Jesus into hell is also a moment where God himself experiences from within, what it is for a human being to be abandoned by his God. Balthasar further affirms that Jesus' descent into the dead means not only that Jesus is in solidarity with humanity in physical death, but he is also in solidarity with humanity as guilty sinners. In this way Jesus is the substitute (*Stellvertreter*) for sinners.[559]

Kasper, like Gnilka, justifies that Jesus' humiliation and suffering in no way contradict or damage his divine-messianic identity and dignity, but rather is part of what it is to be a messiah. Jesus is a unique messianic king and this is well depicted in Jesus' humiliation

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[554] A detailed study on Rahner's theology of death is found in Peter C. Phan, *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner's Eschatology* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1988), 79-115.
[555] Phan, *Eternity in Time*, 109. Also see Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (London: Burn and Oats, 1965), 62.
[556] Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, 62-63.
[557] Eamonn Mulcahy, *The Cause of our Salvation: Soteriological Causality according to some Modern British Theologians 1988-1998* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2007), 456.
[558] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, second edition, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).
[559] Cf. Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, (on solidarity, 164-165), (on the experience of the second death, 168-172), (on the experience of sin, 172-174). Balthasar concludes with two significant observations: Firstly, Jesus, through death enters radical passivity and helplessness, real solidarity with sinners, experiencing total and ultimate rejection. Secondly, through the death and sufferings of Jesus on the cross, God's love was able to descend into 'hell' itself and, even there, forgive and redeem humankind.

on the cross, and it is in this very moment that the kingship of Jesus powerfully appears on the scene of human history.[560]

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI dealing on the issue of expiation and atonement identifies a challenging nature of the passion and death of Jesus and summarises, "There is an insoluble contradiction between Jesus' message about the kingdom of God and the notion of his vicarious expiatory death… The idea of expiation is incomprehensible to the modern mind."[561] However, Jeremias identifies Jesus as the bearer of the Spirit and "God's last and final messenger" (Heb 1:2). "His proclamation is an eschatological event" and "God is speaking his final word" in and through his Son.[562]

Kasper sees the revelation of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures in a two-fold manner, these two however, belonging indissolubly together (Lk 24:19; Mk 1:27; 1 Thess 1:5): The word is never without its accompanying deed, and the deed is never without the word that proclaims it. In Jesus also, the concluding revelation is manifested in two ways: in the acts of power and in the words of authority (Mt 11:5).

Kasper opines that through the death of Jesus the long awaited new worship has become a reality and hence, temple sacrifices and mosaic laws have lost their long-existing validity. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI also opines that through the sacrificial death of Jesus atonement was made for the world; sins of the world were wiped away and in the Pope's words: "God's relationship to the world, formerly distorted by sin, was now renewed. Reconciliation has been accomplished."[563]

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[560] Cf. Joachim Gnilka, *Wie das Christentum Entstand: Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Band III (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2004), 147-148.

[561] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 118 - 119. Also some notable exegetes like Rudolf Pesch, Gerhard Lohfink, Ulrich Wilckens do indeed see an important difference, but not an insoluble antithesis between the two. They argue that Jesus began by offering the good news of God's kingdom and his unconditional forgiveness, but that he had to acknowledge the rejection of this offer and so came to identify his mission with that of the Suffering Servant. After his offer was refused, he realised that the only remaining path was that of vicarious expiation: that he had to take upon himself the disaster looming over Israel, thereby obtaining salvation for many.

[562] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 85.

[563] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 230.

3.1.4.3 Theological Significance of Jesus' Sacrifice

Kasper tries to explain how Jesus himself gave a theological interpretation of his death, especially when Jesus asked Jacob and John if they were able to drink the cup that he would drink (Mk 10:38). Jesus used this word 'cup' again in the garden of Gethsemane, which evidently meant his forthcoming suffering and death (Mk 14:36). His cry on Jerusalem during the last visit there and before his final entry, make it evident that Jesus looked forward to his final visit (Mt 23:37-39; Lk 13:34-35). Hence, Jesus was certain about his imminent death and was convinced that it was God's will as foretold in the Scriptures.

Kasper and Moltmann are aware of the uneasiness of the Christians and especially the theologians, who constantly face questions and even slogans concerning the death of Jesus like – God is dead. Nietzsche, known as the prophet of the death of God, not only argued for it, but also went to the extreme of predicting nihilism as the result of atheism. "God's shadow is a long one, and we must first conquer this shadow,"[564] he said. The death of God was the greatest event for Nietzsche. Christianity for him is a "nihilistic religion. Nihilist and Christian (*Nihilist und Christ*)" [565] he found that these rhymed.

Kasper acknowledges the several attempts made in modern scholarship to understand the death of Jesus: in general - on the knowledge of God concerning the death of Christ on the cross, and in particular - the understanding of God's being from the death of Jesus. However, Moltmann opines that all theological traditions have always considered the cross and the resurrection of Jesus within the horizons of soteriology. He further states, "My interpretation of the death of Christ, then, is not as an event between God and man, but primarily as an event within the Trinity between Jesus and His Father, an event from which the Spirit proceeds.[566]

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[564] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in Rhymes and Appendix of Songs*, trans., Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Book Edition, 1974), 167.

[565] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 41; idem, *Faith and the Future*, 54-55.

[566] Jürgen Moltmann, "The Crucified God: God and the Trinity Today," *CONC 16* (1976), 31.

Karl Rahner understood the death of Jesus as the death of God in the sense that through his death (Jesus'), "our death (becomes) the death of the immortal God himself."[567] He attempts to explain the death of Jesus not only in its saving efficacy but also in its very nature. Rahner further says, "The death of Jesus is a statement of God about himself."[568] To what degree is God himself 'concerned in' or 'affected by' the fate of Jesus on the cross? Can the death of Jesus be identified as the death of God? Who then is God – the one who lets Jesus die or at the same time the Jesus who dies? These are a few questions Kasper maintains, still continued to be discussed in the theological circles.

Hans Urs von Balthasar has taken up this formula 'the death of God' and developed the 'paschal mystery' under the title 'The Death of God as the Source of Salvation, Revelation and Theology.'[569] For Karl Barth, "the *crucified* Jesus is the 'image of the invisible God.'"[570] Eberhard Jüngel has followed Barth in developing the fundamental notion of 'the death of the living God,' largely as the result of the 'death of God theology.'[571]

Pannenberg opines that Christ's passion and death must not be regarded as though it did not affect the 'eternal placidity' of God's triune life. On the contrary, the crucifixion of Jesus' person as the mediator of God's kingdom, places simultaneously the deity of the God of Jesus, also in question.[572] He further says that one must not think of the Father as 'unaffected' (*unberührt*) by the passion of the Son, rather, the Father shares in the Son's passion and suffering as co-sufferer (co-suffering - *Mit-Leiden*).[573]

Kasper also makes a similar attempt since for him, the death of Jesus on the Cross is the centre of his theological thinking, and he maintains that everything stems from the crucified Christ, the cross standing at the heart of the trinitarian being of God. The focus

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[567] Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. IV, 113.

[568] Karl Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi* , Vol. II (London: Burn and Oates, 1969), 207f.

[569] See Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Mysterium Paschale," in *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* III, 2 (1969): 133-326.

[570] Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, 123.

[571] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, „Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottes. Ein Plakat," *ZThK* 65 (1968): 1-24.

[572] See also Wolfart Pannenberg, "Der Gott der Geshichte: Der Trinitarische Gott und die Wahrheit der Geshichte," in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Band II, W.Pannenberg (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967) 123.

[573] Along similar lines Moltmann writes that while the Son suffers and dies on the cross, the Father suffers also with him, "but not in the same way." See *The Crucified God*, 203.

is not just on the 'cross and resurrection,' but on the 'resurrection of the crucified Christ.' Kasper thus identifies "Jesus' hidden soteriology" in the "eschatological interpretation of Jesus' death."[574] He further considers the death of Jesus on the cross not just as a heroic deed or any consequence of courageous activity, but rather as the final resume of all that he said and did; the coming of God's eschatological rule. The cross thus becomes for Kasper, revelation of God's love and the answer to the question about the sufferings of human beings.[575] Hence, Kasper's entire attention is on the Kingdom of God that appeared in Jesus' person and activity, which finally culminated in his obedient death, thereby giving way to the dawn of a new age.

Christology, according to Kasper, which tries to think of the death of Jesus as 'the death of God,' must also take into consideration the kenotic element of the sacrifice of Jesus. Moltmann understands the death of Jesus as a death in God. He says, "Jesus' death cannot be understood 'as the death of God,' but only as death *in* God… The origin of Christian theology is only the death on the cross in God and God in Jesus' death.[576] According to Paul Althaus "Christology must be done in the light of the cross… the full and undiminished deity of God is to be found in the complete helplessness, in the final agony of the crucified Jesus, at the point where no 'divine nature' is to be seen."[577]

God, in the crucified Jesus, invites the world to understand his sufferings and his hopes for the humanity. Kasper rightly observes the death of Jesus from the sacrificial point of view. The meaning of self-sacrificing love through life is brought to perfection in the cross of Jesus. Kasper explains:

> Through his sacrificial offering of his life 'for the many' Jesus Christ did not merely disclose anew this meaning of life. He also made it possible in a new way. At the same time he also showed that the connection between life and love means that love is only

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[574] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 120; Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 210; See also Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2003).

[575] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Das Kreuz als Offenbarung der Liebe Gottes," *Catholica* 61, no. 1 (2007): 1-14. For more on theology of the cross see also Kazo Kitamori, *Theologie des Schmerzes Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972); Heinz Schürmann, *Jesu ureigener Tod. Exegetische Besinnungen und Ausblick* (Feriburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1975), 130-155; Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 229-240.

[576] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 207.

[577] Moltmann in his book *The Crucified God* quotes Paul Althaus, a German Lutheran Theologian in the 1930s to 50s. See especially page 206.

> perfected when it goes beyond itself in the direction of God, and is only fully realised in the fellowship of life and love with God.[578]

Sacrifice, therefore, says Kasper, is not just a ritual act, but something much more – giving of the self to God so as to attain fellowship with him. The reality of Jesus is not just the earthly life of Jesus, but also his death and resurrection. Christology, therefore, Kasper opines, cannot be restricted to Jesuology, but rather should be unfolded as the answer of the entire fate of Jesus Christ.[579]

Kasper finally asserts that, "the world stands not only under an eschatological reservation but also under an eschatological promise, the promise of ultimate acceptance of God, of the ultimate victory of justice, truth, freedom, and love over hatred, injustice, falsehood and violence,"[580] which has already begun with the passion and death of Jesus on the cross and through his glorious resurrection. However, the final victory is yet to be achieved when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

3.1.5 The Death of Jesus as Understood Today

Rewriting history is always a difficult task since the accuracy of the reproduction depends on many factrors like: availability of the material at hand and its authenticity, changes in the socio-cultural settings, creative thinking of the historian, etc. Kasper, explaining the passion and death of Jesus, holds the mystery of the Cross right in the centre of his christological deliberations. He also establishes the fact that Jesus' death was a sacrificial and an atoning death, not only for the redemption of Israel, but for the salvation of entire humanity.

Over a couple of decades scholarly studies on Jesus' crucifixion have attempted to focus on the following question: How does the crucifixion of Jesus make sense for the people of his time and especially for modern man today? In other words, the manner of Jesus' life and the character of his death are questiond. While discussing historical issues, especially gruesome ones, care should be taken that the past painful events do not provoke

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[578] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 88.

[579] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 214.

[580] Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, 20-21.

revengeful attitudes or counter retaliation. History has witnessed this in the past decades, when the world, under the banner of religion, experienced genocides and world wars. Christianity, if it needs to continue and fulfil the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today, it has to live in this world as Christ lived, avoiding to be contemptuous and scornful to past painful history.

In this connection, one of the lasting achievements of the Second Vatican Council was its repudiation of the claim that the Jewish people were responsible for Jesus' death. *Nostra Aetate* clearly states:[581]

> Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. Jn 19:6), neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion. It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture.

The question concerning the salvific character is also in the list of debating topics. The language of the sacrifice of Jesus is for many people mostly unintelligible, and even offensive for few others because, it is appears to be morally primitive and barbaric. When a Christian visits the Kali temple in Kolkata, India, and steps into the water which is nothing but a pool of blood from sacrificed goats, he experiences a terrific shock because such gestures of sacrificing sheep and goats is incomprehensible to a normal Christian mind. Questions immediately arise, like – "What have these innocent goats to do with human sin? Why are these innocent goats being made scapegoats? Is God really pleased with such sacrifices, and are human sins really forgiven?"

Similar questions are frequently asked when people of other faiths speak about the crucifixion of Jesus. How could Jesus, considered to be the Son of God, be crucified as a sin-offering? How can God allow the suffering and death of one innocent man as a condition for releasing the guilty? If the debt is actually paid through the death of Jesus on the cross, in what sense is God still merciful? How can God be just, if he pays the debt that humans actually owe?

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[581] Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, 4.

Further, the cross itself, has today become an element of discussion. Cross, being a symbol of shame and dread for many, could it be permissible and allowed then, to hang them on the walls? Many of the schools, hospitals, and different public offices are campaigning against crosses. Much worse, the same is even demanded from Christian and Catholic populations. This has been the situation in India, especially in the North, where cases of vandalism and desecration of churches have been often witnessed. Of late, this issue has been discussed even in many parts of Europe. One gets a feeling that probably a total extermination or eradication of Christianity has been systematically and tactfully planned. In the recent months, the jihadist extremists' militant group (ISIS) and the posting of internet videos of their destructive activities, have further created terror and serious worries in the European continent.

Even *Ecclesia in Asia* makes a strong reference to the forces that threaten our world today through conflicts and wars, Asia not being exempt from these. It highlights two such forces: intolerance and marginalisation in all spheres, namely, social, cultural, political and even religious. Violence in all its forms has been increasing, affecting individual and social life, and thereby causing a so-called culture of death (EA 38). However, there are no clear-cut answers to these issues but Kasper envisages that coming together on a common platform and discussing them amicably, is not only reasonable but also the need of the hour. Kasper reminds that the Church is called upon to imitate Jesus in restoring the dignity of every human person and in promoting gospel values. He also acknowledges the role of the Church in bringing about peace, justice and reconciliation and her genuine efforts in resolving such conflicts through harmonious dialogue. Finally, Kasper sees the death of Jesus as a supreme act of peace and reconciliation between God and his creation.

Concluding Remarks

Kasper sees the death of Jesus on the cross as the centre of all Christian theology. All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death, have their focal point in the crucified Christ. On the cross, God stretched out his hands to embrace the ends of the earth. Thus, God invites the whole earth to understand his suffering and his hopes in the outstretched arms of the crucified Jesus, and therefore, in God. *Ecclesia in Asia* puts it succinctly, "On the Cross, he took upon himself the sins of the world – past, present and

future" (EA 11). Jesus' death on the cross reveals his pathetic state of suffering and abandonment

Kasper has observed the death of Jesus more profoundly. He has stressed two significant elements in this propitiatory act of Jesus, namely, the saving action of God in and through Jesus and Jesus' voluntary sacrifice. Events like the last supper, visit to Jerusalem, the cleansing of the Temple as a prophetic action symbolising the end of the Old Testament, the dawn of the eschatological age, and specially Jesus' conflicts with his opponents, all these, in Kasper's opinion, clearly signify that Jesus saw a redemptive value in his death.

Kasper has also proved how Jesus awaits the coming of the Kingdom through his service, obedience and death, and rightly calls Jesus as "man for others."[582] He sees Jesus as love incarnate and the personified love of God and thus maintains that Jesus' obedient death is "the distillation, the essence, and the final transcendent culmination of his whole activity."[583] It would be wrong in Kasper's opinion if one restricts the redemptive work of Jesus only to his death. The death of Jesus, according to him, gives final clarity to the entire redemptive plan of God. *Ecclesia in Asia* meaningfully encapsulates, "Through Jesus' Paschal Sacrifice *the Father irrevocably offers reconciliation and fullness of life to the world*" (EA 12).

In the above investigation, attempts have been made to explain Kasper's understanding of the salvific nature of Jesus' passion and death. Not only the death of Jesus, but also all the events leading to the crucifixion have been discussed, in order to bring out the salvific value of Jesus' sacrifice. The incarnate Word, Jesus, through his passion and death, has given a new meaning to the sufferings of humanity, especially to all those who travel with him. Jesus' death has a special character, because the path Jesus took is intended to lead every human person towards a new destination, God. Jesus on the cross could be the "scandal" of Christianity but through Jesus, God took upon himself human nature and through his suffering and death won salvation for all people (EA 12). Kasper has tried to prove the cross of Jesus as the revelation of God's love for humanity. Finally, it may be said that, death of Jesus on the cross, is God's presence and plan to save human beings in the human condition.

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[582] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 120.

[583] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 121.

PART II: THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION

Introduction

The question of Jesus' resurrection has been at the heart of Christian faith. No other doctrine in Christian theology has been regarded as important and weighty as the doctrine of Jesus' resurrection. Early Christianity has always affirmed that after Jesus' disgraceful death, God mightily raised him from the dead. An increasing dissatisfaction is also being observed among contemporary historical-critical scholars, especially with regard to the resurrection and to the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection. At the 'Resurrection Summit,' which was held during Easter in 1996 at St. Joseph's Seminary, New York, serious doubts were raised about the exegetical method used in clarifying historical and theological questions concerning the resurrection of Jesus.[584] The questions concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ do not have one word answers, and hence, serious deliberations are needed in answering them. Moreover, in the present times, this issue is not free from crucial obstacles and is often considered an impasse. To the various questions on Jesus Christ: Who was he? What were his aims? Why did he die? What happened next? Christianity has been giving only one answer: Jesus is the Son of God. He died for our sins and God raised him from the dead.[585] Christian theology has tried to answer these questions, examining the issue of resurrection of Jesus from various angles.[586]

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[584] Cf. Peter De Mey, "Historical Criticism and the Resurrection of Jesus: A New Tendency in Recent Scholarship" *Louvain Studies* 23 (1998): 246.

[585] Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 612-653.

[586] For more on resurrection see Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, third edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964); Bertold Klappert, ed., *Diskussion um Kreuz und Auferstehung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Aussaat-Verl., 1967); Adolf Kolping, *Wunder und Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Bergen-Enkheim bei Frankfurt am Main: Kaffke, 1969); Günter Kegel, *Auferstehung Jesu – Auferstehung der Toten: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970); Ulrich Wilckens, *Auferstehung: Das biblische Auferstehungszeugnis historisch untersucht und erklärt* (Stuttgart-Berlin: Kreuz-Verl., 1970); Adriaan Geense, *Auferstehung und Offenbarung: Über den Ort der Frage nach der Auferstehung Jesu Christi in der heutigen deutschen evangelischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1971); Walter Künneth, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi von den Toten: Dokumentation eines Streitgesprächs*, ed. Christian Möller (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verl., 1973); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Die Auferstehung Jesu als Grund der Erlösung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1979); Gerd Luedemann, *Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 1995); William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, revised edition (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2002); Gaza Vermes, *The Resurrection* (Penguin, 2011); Christopher Bryan, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (Oxford: University Press, 2011).

3.2 Scriptural Foundation and Belief in Jesus' Resurrection

Within Judaism, a considerable belief and speculation about what happened to the dead in general, and to dead Jews in particular did always exist. The Sadducees denied any doctrine of resurrection (Mk 12:18) and they insisted that the Torah itself did not teach such post-mortem existence. The Pharisees however, developed different theories to explain their continued state of existence between physical death and physical resurrection. It is interesting to note that some writings speak of souls in disembodied bliss; some others speculate souls as angelic or astral beings, and so on.[587] If, on the one hand, the Pharisees were trying to overthrow the existing order and establish the Kingdom of God, on the other hand, the Sadducees denying such doctrines, posed some threat to the Pharisees.[588]

Kasper however initiates the discussion by making a clear contrast between two extremes: the resignation and disappointment of the disciples on the one hand, and the triumph of the Cross on the other. Newness of life and uniqueness, new hopes and purpose of life, inspiring parables, noble values and fine qualities, all these came to life with Jesus of Nazareth and saw their end with his crucifixion and death. Kasper formulates this despairing condition of the disciples: "the violence and scandal of Jesus' death on the cross seemed the end of everything. Even Jesus' disciples apparently saw his death as the end of their hopes."[589]

Has Jesus left behind a legacy to bank on? Even when the men within his inner circle finally gave up everything, who else would dare to take on and continue from where Jesus left? Kasper uses two clauses to summarise this entire episode: the life of Jesus was "not only his private failure but a public catastrophe for his 'mission.'"[590] In other words, the tragedy did not just affect Jesus' intimate circle, much more; it was also a disaster for

[587] Cf. N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Resurrection of Jesus: The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical Problem*. For the complete article, visit http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Historical_Problem.htm (accessed July 12, 2012). Cf. also Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004). The chapter on ancient Egypt is certainly very interesting, where the author analyses various religions of ancient Egypt and their views on afterlife, which he proves is the outcome of the influence and combination of several factors.

[588] For further information on the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Vol. I (London: SPCK, 1992), 211-212.

[589] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 124. In the previous part of this chapter 'Passion and Death of the Messiah' it has been highlighted how some scholars argue that Jesus himself was unaware of his tragic end and hence they reject the salvific value of Jesus' passion and death.

[590] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 124.

all those who had put their hopes and trust in him and his teachings. The 'Kingdom' message goes down utterly discredited, and according to Kasper, since Jesus had related his 'cause' so closely to his own person, this 'cause' of the coming of the Kingdom of God could not simply continue after his death.

However, the New Testament (especially the Gospels, the Acts, and the Pauline Letters) bring out the triumphant victory of the crucified, in a very powerful way. It provides authoritative and unambiguous response concerning the resurrection of Jesus. "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34), this is how the disciples of Jesus greeted each other. "God raised him (Jesus) up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:24); "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain" (1 Cor 15:14), this is how Paul, using absolute and emphatic terms, proclaimed the triumph of the Cross. Kasper maintains that the cold and tired spirits of the disciples now received a complete new face, as they encountered the risen Lord. This excitement and fervour enabled them in their initial stages as they set off to reconstruct the fallen scattered hopes of the people. Even though, the resurrected Christ has brought new hopes for humanity, this one-of-a-kind 'Resurrection event,' however is not spared of complexities and difficulties.[591]

Among the many intricacies, Kasper hints at the main one - the tradition itself. Thereby, the attention is drawn precisely to the Easter Kerygma and Easter Stories: the two sources that make for the traditions, and which, according to Kasper, should be clearly distinguished. One does not find much of a problem with the Easter Kerygma, since these are old acclamations, hymns, creedal formulations, which testify the resurrection accounts, and are taken from the liturgy.[592] Easter Stories, especially in Luke and John, no doubt partially contain traditions, but their presentations of the post-Resurrection

[591] For more on the problematic nature of resurrection see John E. Alsup, *The Post-resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verl., 1975); Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Gerald O' Collins, *Interpreting the Resurrection: Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection* (US: Paulist Press International, 1989); George Essen, *Historische Vernunft und Auferweckung Jesu: Theologie und Historik im Streit um den Begriff geschichtlicher Wirklichkeit* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verl., 1995); Hans-Joachim Eckstein, *Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung* (Neukirchen-Vulyn: Neukirchener, 2002); Thomas A. Miller, *Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead? A Surgeon-Scientist Examines the Evidence* (Illinois: Crossway, 2013).

[592] Cf. Lk 24:34; Phil 2: 6-11; 1 Cor 15:3-5; Acts 10:40 ff; Rom 1:3 ff; Acts 2: 23; 3: 15; 1 Tim 3:16; Rom 10:5-8 and Ep 4:7-12. These and such statements witnessing the resurrection of Jesus are spread out throughout the Gospels, Acts and Pauline Letters.

appearances vary from kerygmatic formulas. Traditions and stories, opines Kasper, indicate two different directions – "the traditions regarding the appearances originally point towards Galilee, the stories of the tomb belong of course to Jerusalem."[593]

3.2.1 Jesus' Resurrection: A Hermeneutical Approach

As mentioned earlier, the resurrection of Jesus, to date, continues to fascinate both believers and sceptics alike. The former find their latest advocate in Nicholas Thomas Wright, who argues for the physical resurrection of Jesus' dead and buried body.[594] Without Jesus' bodily resurrection there can be no acknowledgement of him as the Christ. The sceptics are spearheaded by John Dominic Crossan, who argues for the improbability of Jesus' properly buried and his physical resurrection.[595] On the contrary, Crossan tends to see the resurrection as an inner experience leading to a personal transformation. It is interesting to note how both these trends of thoughts merge in the person of Apostle Thomas in St. John's Gospel:[596] In the beginning he demands a personal inspection (Jn 20:25), but later, upon seeing Jesus, comes to have faith in him as the Lord (Jn 20:28).

Right through the centuries, innumerable objections concerning the proclamation of the Easter kerygma have surfaced. Hermann Samuel Reimarus is never forgotten for the ten striking differences, and again, for the ten outright contradictions that he found in the gospel reports of the Easter event. In the eyes of Reimarus, a report of an historical event must be as objective as an interrogation before a court. He states:

> I am definitely assured that if today in court four witnesses were heard in a case and their testimony was as different in all respects as is that of our four evangelists, the conclusion would at least have to be made that no case could be constructed on such conflicting testimony. Here it is a question of the truth of Jesus' resurrection, and insofar as it is to be judged by the mere testimonies of witnesses, unanimity of their testimony is necessary as

[593] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 126.
[594] Cf. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Vol. III (London: SPCK, 2012) 340-374, 679-682.
[595] Cf. John Dominic Crossan, "Bodily-Resurrection Faith," in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue*, ed. Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) 171-186.
[596] Cf. David J. Norman, "Doubt and the Resurrection of Jesus," *TS* 69 (2008): 786.

> to who saw him, where and how often, what he said and did in the meantime, and finally, what became of him.[597]

Orthodox Lutheran Lessing, one of the most outstanding representatives of the Enlightenment era was alarmed by Reimarus' attack on the resurrection of Jesus. Not being upset by the possible contradictions in the biblical, he defended: "In the account of the evangelists, there may appear as many contradictions as possible. There are never contradictions between the witnesses themselves, but between the historians; it is not the testimonies, which contain contradictions, but the reports of the testimonies."[598]

Among the more serious objections to Jesus' resurrection, the most famous has been that of Rudolf Bultmann. In a much-discussed passage, Bultmann asserts that the resurrection-language of the early Church moreover denoted the early disciples' faith who, wanted to justify the crucifixion of Jesus as a divine act of salvation, and not a tragic defeat. Easter then, concludes Bultmann, is not about the resurrection of Jesus, but of the revival of the faith of the early Church.[599]

However, Bultmann's hypothesis has been given a twist by Gerd Lüdemann,[600] who offered a classical historical-critical investigation of the gospel accounts, especially of the burial, the empty tomb, and the appearances. Discussing on the historical probability of those verses that transmit an older tradition, Lüdemann does ascribe historical value to Jesus' appearances to Peter and Paul but he prefers to speak in terms of 'seeings' rather than 'appearances.' In his opinion, the word 'seeing' must be explained psychologically. Lüdemann further argues that in a mourning process, one gradually tries to cope with the real absence of the deceased, who can sometimes, in the initial stages be experienced as being present. Peter's case is therefore, a perfect example of how he "wanted to make

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[597] Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, Vol. I and II, ed. Gerhard Alexander (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1972). Parts of it have been translated in Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Reimarus: Fragments*, trans. Ralph S. Fraser (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985). See especially 153-200.

[598] Gotthold E. Lessing, „Gegensätze des Herausgebers," in *Lessings theologie-kritische Schriften* 1, ed. Arno Schilson, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke und Briefe, 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989): 348.

[599] Cf. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," 38-44.

[600] Cf. Gerd Lüdemann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu: Historie, Erfahrung, Theologie* (Stuttgart: Radius Verlag, 1994). This book was later translated by John Bowden and titled, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). See also Gerd Lüdemann and Alf Özen, *Was mit Jesus wirklich geschah: Die Auferstehung historisch betrachtet* (Stuttgard: Radius, 1995), translated later by John Bowden titled *What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection* (London: SCM, 1995).

Jesus unconditionally alive again, because he could not bear his mourning."[601] Answering this view of Lüdemann, Gerald O'Collins makes the following argument: "If depth psychology is applied to Peter and Paul, why not interpret Lüdemann's own text as expressing unconscious conflicts and longings within his psyche?"[602]

Pannenberg deplores the fact that Lüdemann's research is guided by "the dogma of the secularistic worldview that the conceivability of a divine act has to be excluded in principle."[603] Similarly, even Hans Kessler supposes that Lüdemann considers in principle only a psychological reconstruction of the Easter experiences, and he (Lüdemann) certainly does not appeal to divine agency.[604] Kasper would argue that psychological explanations of the visions need not necessarily lead to negative conclusions with regard to the existence of the raised and visible Christ.

In Kasper's opinion, while discussing the resurrection of Jesus two important things are to be taken for granted. Christian historians should acknowledge their belief in the resurrection of Jesus even when they are seeking careful historical evidence to their claims. Secondly, if the resurrection of Jesus did take place, only a theological explanation, based upon the powers of God to raise the dead, would be and must be fully satisfactory to human reason. Even Cardinal König had pointed out this difficulty to the Second Vatican Council when he explained that it is not difficult to show that the sacred books are sometimes deficient in accuracy as regards historical and scientific matters, and not all difficulties can be easily solved.[605] Further, Kasper is certain that the cause of Jesus would definitely not continue, if not for the belief and personal experience that Jesus is present in a new way. Without this belief in the living Lord, not only his person but also his cause would have been dead.[606]

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[601] Lüdemann and Özen, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, 94.

[602] Gerald O' Collins, "Review of Lüdemann," *TS* 57 (1996): 341-343. This article of O' Collins is a review of Lüdemann's *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

[603] Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, „Die Auferstehung Jesu: Historie und Theologie," *ZThK* 91 (1994): 318-328. See specially 323.

[604] Cf. Hans Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten: Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi in biblischer, fundamentaltheologischer und systematischer Sicht*, second edition (Würzburg: Echter, 1995), 439.

[605] Cf. Alois Grillmeier, "The Divine Inspiration and the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. III, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. William Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 205.

[606] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 238.

Gerald O'Collins, like Kasper, attempts to safeguard the belief in a rational justification of the Easter-faith and the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection, providing good number of historical arguments.[607] He has made a detailed study on the resurrection of Jesus, evaluating the background theories, historical evidences, testimonies and experiences. He attempts to tackle the issue of analogies to the resurrection appearances of Jesus.[608] Analogy demands not just similarity but dissimilarity too,[609] and O'Collins therefore stresses the dissimilarity of the resurrection appearances by affirming at the same time, the once-and-for-all event of Christ's transformation. He sees the effect of Jesus' resurrection on the disciples as evidence of its reality, for effects have "a special relationship to, and consistently resemble, their causes."[610]

According to Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, an American theologian, since the resurrection of Jesus transcends human experience as well, the best foundation for contemporary Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus is "the faith and testimony of the early Christian community."[611] He further continues:

> Shifts in vocabulary necessarily entail shifts in meaning. In addition, we do not have any access to the referent, the resurrection of Jesus, independent of the New Testament metaphors. Consequently the New Testament metaphors are irreplaceable metaphors not only in so far as they express our continuity with early Christian faith, but also in so far as they bring to the fore the meaning of that testimony.[612]

Kasper also holds very strongly to the faith-element in the resurrection episode. According to him, Jesus' cause could not be carried on after his death without faith, faith that his person is present today in a new way. Without faith in the resurrected, the remembrance of the earthly Jesus would remain more a remembrance of the death of an innocent victim; and it would not be a reason for hope, but rather a cause for resignation

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[607] See Greald O' Collins, *Easter Faith*: *Believing in the Risen Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003).

[608] Cf. Gerald O' Collins, "The Resurrection: The State of the Questions," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus,* ed. Stephen T. Davis et al. (New York: Oxford University, 1997) 5-28. See also O' Collins, *Easter Faith*, 5-24.

[609] O' Collins, "The Resurrection," 13. Balthasar has also examined the unique nature of Jesus' resurrection. Cf. *Mysterium Paschale*, 190-202.

[610] O' Collins, "The Resurrection," 23.

[611] Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Roman Catholic Fundamental Theology," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Davis, Kendall and O' Collins, 238.

[612] Fiorenza, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Roman Catholic Fundamental Theology," 242.

and scepticism.[613] Kasper finally believes that these New Testament testimonies of God's action on behalf of Jesus in and through the Holy Spirit could be the proposed foundation of Christian faith, rather than a strict historical reconstruction of the origins of belief in Jesus' resurrection.

3.2.2 The Empty Tomb: Its Historicity and Necessity

There exists an element of doubt while discussing the resurrection appearances. People claim to have personal experiences of apparitions and hence, there exist innumerable accounts of various people seeing an apparition over an extended period of time.[614] When Jesus' resurrection is being discussed, the issue of the empty tomb and its historicity is one of the many concerns. Can the descriptions of the empty tomb presented by the Gospel narratives have a historical core, since Kasper clearly states that "historically it can only be put forward as probable that the tomb was found empty; how it became empty cannot be established historically?"[615] However, Kasper "admits a certain historical probability to the empty tomb tradition. He considers the empty tomb tradition as a very ancient tradition, which must very probably be described as historical… Though he does not emphasize its historical value in an explicit way, he has not denied it either."[616] Besides, there seems to be a tremendous effort to show similarities between post-death apparition experiences and Jesus' resurrection appearances.[617]

As regards the empty tomb, Kasper calls it an ambiguous phenomenon. The empty tomb and the angel's solemn announcement may be seen as the points of departure of Easter

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[613] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 238.

[614] Cf. Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus* (New York: T and T Clark, 2005), 270, especially see 293. See also Philip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 77-82 and 84-85.

[615] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 128. See also Gerhard Wolfgang Ittel, *Ostern und das leere Grab* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus Mohn, 1967); Friedrich Ch. Zauner, *Das Grab ist leer: Die fünfzig Tage* (Steyr: Ennsthaler, 1998); Peter W. L. Walker, *Das Geheimnis des leeren Grabes: Ereignisse – Orte – Bedeutung* (Würzburg: Echter, 2002).

[616] Sebastian Chalakkal, *The Post-Resurrection Appearances in Contemporary Catholic Christology* (Romae: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 2004), 21. This work is the excerpt of his dissertation thesis where the author tries to argue that today, bereavement-experiences, mystical and Christie visions, apparitions and hallucinations are theologically observed as legitimate interpretations for accounts on the resurrection, appearances, and the empty tomb.

[617] Cf. O' Collins, *Easter Faith*, 11-24. Here, O' Collins argues for the uniqueness of resurrection appearances, though acknowledging the similarities between them and post-death experiences; Also see Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 269-299. Allison points out that it has been argued "that it was not the empty tomb that begot hallucinations but hallucinations that begot the empty tomb" *(Resurrecting Jesus* 204); Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus*, 195.

narratives. While attempting to analyse the narratives on the empty tomb in the Gospels, Kasper points out the following discrepancies:

a) Though the visit to the tomb by the women has been narrated by all the four evangelists, inconsistency is found in the number of women who made this visit. Mark (16:1) and Luke (24:10) mention three, and then again they are not the same three women, whereas, Matthew (28:1) speaks of two, and John (20:1) of only one.
b) The women ran to the grave without even realising their incapability to roll back the stone.
c) It is not certain, whether in those times it was customary to anoint a dead body and in addition, to do that after three days.
d) Even after the command of the Angel to inform the disciples of Jesus' meeting at Galilee, the women were found silent, a typical Marcan speciality.[618]

For O' Collins, the differentiation between why the disciples came to faith from what they believed had happened to Jesus after his death and burial, helps guarantee the uniqueness of the resurrection appearances; the empty tomb accounts crystallise that difference.[619] The empty tomb is necessary for comprehending the mystery of the resurrection appearances. Without the empty tomb, the argument for a bodily resurrection is sapped of its force and conviction;[620] without the empty tomb narratives there is no link between the death of Jesus on Calvary and his glorification/exaltation. The empty tomb accounts therefore, provide the necessary transition between Jesus' death/burial and his resurrection from the dead. If dispensed with the empty tomb, one can only argue that after Jesus gives up his spirit on the cross (Jn 19:30), he experiences exaltation, rendering the physical resurrection of his body redundant.[621]

Pannenberg establishes the case for the necessity of the empty tomb for any bodily resurrection of Jesus. He asserts that, "without the empty tomb, the Christian

[618] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 127. Also see Leslie Houlden, "The Resurrection: History, Story and Belief" in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1993), 55.

[619] Cf. O' Collins, "The Resurrection," 6. The resurrection appearances act as a bridge for the 'what' of the disciples' faith, and their encounter with the risen Lord reanimates their faith.

[620] See Daniel Kendall and Gerald O' Collins, "The Uniqueness of the Easter Appearances" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992): 287-307. Kendall and O' Collins address the issue by stressing the importance of the eleven seeing the visible manifestation of the risen Lord.

[621] See also William Lane Craig, "On Doubts about the Resurrection," *Modem Theology* 6 (1989): 53-75, see especially 67.

proclamation of Jesus' resurrection *at Jerusalem* of all places would have been in serious trouble, because it could have been easily falsified by just pointing to the place where Jesus had been buried."[622] Kasper agrees with Pannenberg, as far as the physical resurrection of Jesus is concerned. He argues:

> When we consider the empty tomb in relation to the appearances, it is a sign of the corporeal resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Jesus is risen and appeared to the disciples is confirmed by the reality of the empty tomb. In this sense the reality of the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances are related and both are to be taken into account when we deal with the origin of faith in the resurrection of Jesus.[623]

It is worth quoting Dan Cohn-Sherbok, a rabbi of Reform Judaism, who also supports Pannenberg when it comes to the physicality of Jesus' resurrection. He writes:

> Either Jesus was physically resurrected or he wasn't. It's as simple as that. The Gospel account of the empty tomb and the disciples' recognition of the risen Christ point to such a historical conception of the resurrection event. To them it would make no sense that in some spiritual - as opposed to physical sense – Jesus' body was revivified.[624]

When different accounts of Jesus' appearances are closely observed, certain discrepancies are noticed and these inconsistencies and ambiguities are beyond complete harmonisation. All agree on one fact that, although Jesus is raised from the dead and he has appeared to certain disciples, which is the core of all these accounts, the act itself of rising from the dead, is witnessed by none. Hence for Kasper, the starting point is: The disciples have seen the Risen Lord and therefore the fact of the empty tomb, which is however ambiguous, remains simply a sign on the way to faith, a sign for someone who already believes. Schweizer also elaborates this element of faith and the empty tomb:

> All the accounts show unequivocally that the discovery of the empty tomb did not awaken anyone's faith; this was done by the risen Jesus himself, who encountered his disciples… For faith no longer needs the guarantees of proof. To faith, the empty tomb will be a sign

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[622] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "History and the Reality of the Resurrection," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 69.

[623] Chalakkal, *The Post-Resurrection Appearances in Contemporary Catholic Christology*, 21-22.

[624] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish View," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa, 199-200.

> of what has taken place. It will not, however, fight for the empty tomb as for an article of faith, because the truth of Easter does not in fact depend on the empty tomb.[625]

From the above discussion Kasper also opines that the appearances of the Risen Christ support the cause of the empty tomb, and that these post-resurrection appearances played a central role in the early Church and her convictions, not the empty tomb in itself. In his words: "Of itself, the empty tomb is an ambiguous phenomenon… It only becomes clear and unambiguous through the proclamation, which has its source in the appearances of the risen Christ. For the faithful the empty tomb is not a proof but a sign."[626] Hence, for Kasper, the empty tomb becomes a sign of Jesus' resurrection, and the reality of resurrection has been ratified by his appearances.

3.2.3 Kasper's Analysis of the Resurrection of Jesus

As mentioned earlier, Kasper examines the details of the resurrection of Jesus obtained from traditions, Easter kerygma and Easter stories, and identifies in them certain ambiguities and problems. Further, he systematically tries to establish the historical core of the resurrection event and testimonies, which were earlier used as miraculous affirmations of faith. Since the rise of modern theology where critical theologising has become a prominent style, there are countless hypotheses, venturing an intelligible explanation of the origin, content and context of Easter event. Kasper sees in the resurrection of Jesus the manifestation of divine power through which Jesus is exalted as Christ, as *Kyrios*, and therefore Kasper contends that this exceptional event in the life of Jesus has a salvific and redemptive value.

3.2.3.1 Jesus' Resurrection: Manifestation of Divine Power

Kasper postulates that resurrection is a reality that cannot be understood without the aid of similes and images, since all those who are living, are "still on this side of the boundary of death."[627] It is difficult to understand the resurrection in the New Testament

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[625] Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus*, trans. David E. Green (London: SCM Press, 1971), 49-50.

[626] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 128. Also cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*; Paula Gooder, *Journey to the Empty Tomb* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014).

[627] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 144. Cf. also Samuel H. Hooke, *The Resurrection of Christ as History and Experience* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967); Jürgen Becker, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*

without having recourse to the future hope foretold during the Second-Temple Judaism.[628] Kasper maintains that, the belief of the early Christianity in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6) was firmly grounded on the resurrection of their Messiah. Kasper bases his argument on the explicit writings of St. Paul, especially Rom 8:21 and 1 Cor 15:20: creation will be set free from bondage and will obtain the freedom of the children of God, since God has raised Jesus from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. Hence Kasper argues that, the disciples of Jesus believed that they were already, in some sense, participating in the glory of the age to come.

Christopher C. Rowland, a British priest and theologian further explains: "Resurrection of the dead, on the one hand, speaks of the transformation and demonstration of God's righteousness in human history, albeit spoken of in the mythical language appropriate to the dramatic and ultimate activity of God."[629] In proclaiming Jesus' resurrection, early Christians regarded it as a sign of God's power and the imminence of his reign. Kasper identifies a continuity of the 'Kingdom' message of Jesus, beginning in Jesus' mission and continuing in his resurrection. Hence, Kasper understands Jesus' resurrection as the "realisation of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus."[630] Again, in the words of Kasper, "God has accepted the world finally, in Jesus Christ… so the world and history will not simply vanish into nothingness."[631] God, "that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord…," became the formula that attributed God the divine power and glory (Rom 4:24; 8:11; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20). Moltmann formulated God's power in the following words:

> God is the life-giving energy which makes the poor rich, and lifts up downtrodden and raises the dead. Faith in the resurrection is itself an energy which strengthens and raises

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nach dem Neuen Testament: Ostererfahrung und Osterverständnis im Urchristentum (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

[628] See G. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) and E. P. Sanders, *Judaism* (London: SCM, 1992).

[629] Christopher Rowland, "Interpreting the Resurrection," in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1993), 72.

[630] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 145. There are several biblical texts that support the ideology that Yahweh is the Lord of life and death, it is he who kills and brings to life (1 Sam 2:6), and it is he who makes the dead live (Rom 4:17; 2 Cor 1:9). In other words, resurrection is perfectly God's work and with the resurrection of Jesus, the eschatological events have begun to take place. Scriptures, especially the New Testament, vouches to this truth when it attributes the resurrection of Jesus to God (1 Cor 6:14; Rom 10:9; 1. Cor 15:15; Acts 3:15; 5:30).

[631] Kasper, "Hope in the Final Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory," 380.

people up, liberating them from the deadly illusions of power and 'having,' in the perspective of life's future.[632]

Kasper reflects on similar lines because for him, to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ means "faith in the creative potential and in the faithfulness of God,"[633] faith in his divinity. The risen Jesus, argues Kasper like St. Paul, has now a pneumatic body, which means that "the whole person of Jesus is now in the dimension of God… It is not a reanimation of the corpse, but a radical transformation. It is God who brings about this transformation without breaking the continuity with the earthly body."[634] Therefore, Kasper argues that this Easter-faith is not to be appropriated only on the grounds of a miracle, but is to be experienced as a total reliance on God and his divinity, his unsurpassable power of raising the dead to life. It is this element that makes the Easter-faith the essence and core of Christianity. Kasper further asserts: "Easter faith is therefore not a supplement to belief in God and in Jesus Christ, it is the entirety and essence of that belief."[635] Christian faith, that excludes faith in the resurrection of Christ, is deficient, and not complete.

The statements like 'Jesus is alive' or 'we have seen the Lord' (Jn 20:25; 1 Cor 9:1) are often taken as expressions that convey the resurrection faith.[636] Kasper firmly asserts that the resurrection of Jesus is stamped with faith and the appearances of the risen Lord and his words give rise to this faith. For him, it is on faith in the resurrection that the Christian concept of God, either stands or falls.[637] It is God who reveals himself in the countenance of Jesus, and hence, the crucified Jesus is seen as the glory of God.[638] Moltmann expresses it clearly: "In the New Testament there is no faith that does not start *a priori* with the resurrection of Jesus."[639]

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[632] Jürgen Moltmann, "The Resurrection of Christ: Hope for the World," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D' Costa, 80.

[633] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 145.

[634] Chalakkal, *The Post-Resurrection Appearances in Contemporary Catholic Christology*, 23-24.

[635] Kasper, Jesus the Christ, 145.

[636] See W. Marxen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* (London: SCM, 1970).

[637] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 145.

[638] Cf. Chalakkal, *The Post-Resurrection Appearances in Contemporary Catholic Christology*, 33.

[639] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 165. See also Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 145.

Jeremias understands the resurrection of Jesus as the origin of God's new creation. Hence, the resurrected Christ no more returns to decay or corruption (Acts 13:34). Therefore, according to Jeremias, "the disciples must have experienced the appearances of the Risen Lord as an eschatological event, as a dawning of the turning point of the worlds."[640] Kasper asserts: "Jesus' Resurrection is therefore given a place in the eschatological perspective of hope and is characterised as an eschatological event… The Resurrection is not a resumption of the old life, but the beginning of the new creation (cf 1 Cor 15. 42ff)."[641]

Moltmann explains that the resurrection of Jesus Christ not only demonstrates the power of God, but also his faithfulness in fulfiling the earlier promises. In his words: "The *logos* of the *eschaton* is promise of that which is not yet, and for that reason it *makes* history. The promise which announces the *eschaton*, and in which the *eschaton* announces itself, is the motive power, the mainspring, the driving force and the torture of history." [642]

Kasper however argues that the resurrection and the appearances of Jesus were experiences in faith and were actual encounters with Christ in the Spirit. He clearly maintains that it is not the faith that established the reality of Resurrection, but the reality of the resurrected Christ established faith in the disciples through the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Hence, the reality of the resurrection becomes for Kasper a reality of meeting and knowing God, and experiencing the divine power. In these appearances the basis for faith stemmed from Jesus of Nazareth, as the witness of faith.[643] The disciples became gradually aware of the reality of the Kingdom of God which had finally been established in Jesus Christ through the mystery of the cross and the resurrection.

3.2.3.2 Jesus' Resurrection: Exaltation of the Crucified Jesus

Kasper prefers to deal with the analysis of the old confessional formula 1 Cor 15:3-5 and thereby, closely examines clauses like: 'Christ died' - which is a historical statement, a historical facticity; 'for our sins' - which contains a soteriological meaning denoting the objective of Jesus' death; and finally, 'in accordance to the Scriptures' - which affirms

[640] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 309.

[641] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 144. Pope Benedict XVI also subscribes to this view of Kasper.

[642] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 165.

[643] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 139-140.

this death as the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises.[644] Taking this Pauline text as the key passage, Kasper attempts an analysis of the death of Jesus and especially the resurrection appearances, and tries to deduce the meaning and the purpose of the exaltation of Jesus.

The death of Jesus was also understood as the death of him who had been sent as the Messiah of God, which logically also implied the 'death of God.' Such a death of the Messiah and eventually, the death of God, would amount to God-forsakenness, a curse or a punishment, damnation, exclusion and even the expulsion from promised life. The bold statement of Nietzsche 'God was dead' or even 'God has become functionless'[645] is not restricted to just a philosophical, metaphysical or theological statement. This formulation of Nietzsche seems to provide sufficient ground for atheism, when one experiences series of unfortunate events in the world. Moltmann rightly opines:

> Hence the proclamation of the raising of Jesus from the dead by God has also become partly superfluous, partly optional, as long as 'God' is understood as something that is known to us from history, from the world, or from human existence. Only when, along with the knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus, the 'God of the resurrection' can be shown to be 'God' in terms of 'death of God'… only then is the proclamation of the resurrection, and only then are faith and hope in God, something that is necessary, that is new, that is possible in an objective real sense.[646]

Jesus' self-interpretation of his own death clearly indicated that his last days were not characterised by a Spirit of mere resignation, nor was he caught by surprise.[647] Kasper also opines that Jesus knew that his end was near, but at the same time he had control over the situation. He never treated his approaching passion and death as something that had to be just endured. He was aware that he was soon going to strike a deal for all people, before God. Jesus' life on this earth, and especially his last days, demonstrated his

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[644] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 146. Cf. also Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 5. According to Ratzinger, Jesus himself wants that his passion, suffering, death and resurrection, to be understood in terms of Old Testament promises that are now being fulfiled in his person.

[645] Walter Kasper, "The Logos Character of Reality," *Communio* 15 (Fall, 1988): 278.

[646] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 167-168. The declaration 'God is dead' is widely circulated in terms of despair of the hope of resurrection. When Nietzsche formulates that God has become functionless, or God is dead, he means to say that in the world today, the idea of God has no explanatory or vital power.

[647] See C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 110.

perfect obedience to God's will. Jesus submitted himself to God's judgement upon sin, which he perceived as atonement for the sins of humanity.[648]

Kasper attempts to elaborately discuss the meaning and significance of the text 'rising on the third day' (cf. Mt 16:21; 17:23; Lk 18:33; 1 Cor 15:4), which for him, makes the exaltation of Jesus a concrete reality. According to him,

> The theologoumenon of the third day is used precisely in order to express the importance of the real event for salvation and to emphasize that God intervened effectively in a real historical situation for which there was no other solution. The theologoumenon of the third day is therefore concerned with the historicity of salvation, with salvation-history. It brings us to the decisive question of the historicity of the Resurrection itself.[649]

The German version gives more clarity to this idea of Kasper:

> *Es geht ja eben darum, mit Hilfe des Theologoumenons vom dritten Tag die Heilsbedeutsamkeit einies wirklichen Geschehens auszusagen und zu betonen, daß Gott in einer realen geschichtlichen Situation letzter Ausweglosigkeit wirksam eingegriffen hat. Es geht also dem Theologoumenon vom dritten Tag um die Geschichtlichkeit des Heils, um Heils-Geschichte. Damit stehen wir vor der entscheidenden Frage nach der Geschichtlichkeit der Auferstehung selbst*.[650]

The early confession (1 Cor. 15:4) agrees with the Gospels that the turning point came on the third day, the Sunday after Jesus' crucifixion.[651] Guardini highlights the peculiar character of this mysterious event: "they break off suddenly, cross-cut each other, contain contrasts and contradictions that are not easily clarified. Something extraordinary seems to be seeking expression - something that explodes all hitherto known forms of human experience."[652] These elements have been clearly pointed out by Kasper. The extra-ordinary nature of the resurrection-event is one and only of its kind, having neither

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[648] Cf. Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion-Sayings in the Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1965) 302-303.

[649] Kasper. *Jesus the Christ*, 147.

[650] Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, 171-172.

[651] Cf. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 304.

[652] Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), 403.

similarities nor repetitions in world history. Other than the appearances of Jesus, Scriptures provide no more material to substantiate the Resurrection event.[653]

Words like 'exalted' or 'exaltation,' are used in the Scriptures to highlight the theological meaning of the resurrection-event.[654] Through the resurrection and exaltation, Jesus shows his divine authority, and Kasper indicates here, a very close association and significance of "cross, Resurrection, Exaltation, and sending of the Spirit."[655] For Kasper, 'Exaltation' is an expression having two concrete meanings, especially in the gospel of John: "the exaltation on the cross as well as the exaltation to the Father (Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32), the glorification (7:39; 12:16 *et al*)."[656] Kasper contends that the path that Jesus took in his life was not forced or compelled on him, but it was self-willed, and therefore, exaltation and enthronement is seen as a reward for his total obedience. Joachim Jeremias, basing on Mt. 28:18 also opines like Kasper, that the Son of Man prophecy, who would be enthroned as ruler of the world, was now "fulfiled in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus."[657]

Gnilka sees the entire life of Jesus, from incarnation to exaltation, as a path that Jesus took of his own accord. Emptying himself and giving himself up, Jesus replaces the form of God with the form of a servant.[658] Kasper here tries to affirm that God responds towards the obedience of Jesus by resurrecting and exalting Jesus. The way chosen by Jesus is a unique way, the way of self-humiliation, and therefore, Kasper maintains, that this necessarily calls for a unique response and a unique reward from God - resurrection and exaltation.

Kasper believes that the resurrection of Jesus is the end of the cross, and, humanly speaking, the end of disgrace, misery and pain, the end of a total failure. At the same

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[653] Cf. Schweizer, *Jesus*, 46.

[654] This dimension of the resurrection of Jesus has been very powerfully depicted in the Pauline letters, especially to the Philippians (2:9), God exalting Jesus and giving Jesus the name which is above every other name. In the resurrection of Jesus, God enthroned his only begotten Son as the Lord, to whom all glory and dominion is given. He is now the 'exalted Lord,' the *Kyrios*.

[655] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 147.

[656] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 147. Cf. also Eduard Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern*, second edition (Zürich: Zwingli-Verl., 1962); Paul-Gerhard Klumbies, *Von der Hinrichtung zur Himmelfahrt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2010).

[657] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 310.

[658] Cf. Joachim Gnilka, "The Epistle to the Philippians," in *New Testament for Spiritual Reading*, ed. John L. McKenzie (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 33-40.

time, it is a new beginning made possible purely through the power of God, and therefore, a reason for hope. In the meeting of the cross and the resurrection, God enters into human existence through his power and love. Exaltation, for Kasper, is heavenly enthronement and installation in divine dignity and authority of God, who in turn, shares his divine power and glory. With resurrection and exaltation Kasper means that, "Jesus lives wholly and for ever in God (Rom 6:9f)… not spirited away to another-worldly empyrean… It does not mean distance from the world, but a new way of being with us… he is with God as our advocate: *semper interpellans pro nobis* (Heb 7:25)… Cross and Resurrection together form the one *Pascha Domini*. [659]

Through exaltation, Kasper confirms that an entirely new system has been inaugurated, and Jesus, who is now highly exalted, has taken up the position of the universe. In other words, Jesus is 'the Lord, the *Kyrios*' (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11), a title that magnificently expresses the position and power in heaven of the Risen and Exalted Christ.[660] Jesus is not only God's openness to the world, but also its access, the mediator, and the way to the Father. In the words of Schnackenburg, "Jesus' glorification is here seen particularly from the point of view of its universal fruitfulness, of its drawing to itself all men and women who are prepared to believe."[661]

Kasper sees human body as God's creation and according to him, it always describes the whole man and not just a part of him. In the body, the entire person is in relationship to God and his fellow man. When Kasper speaks of an exalted and a pneumatic body in Jesus' resurrection, like Paul (1 Cor 15), he too refers not of the substance of the body, rather, "the dimension in which the body is… the divine dimension.[662]

Kasper finally asserts that, the new dimension of the resurrected and the exalted Jesus makes clear the corporeality of Jesus' resurrection. Exalted by God, Jesus is permanently

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[659] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 149-150; Markus Schnauß, *Die Jesu-Geschichte als Repräsentation des Erhöhten* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2011), 192-197.

[660] See Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), 195-237; Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel. Ihre Geschichte im frühem Christentum*, fifth edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995) 67-132; Werner Kramer, *Christus – Kyrios – Gottessohn: Untersuchungen zu Gebrauch und Bedeutung der christologischen Bezeichnungen bei Paulus und den vorpaulinischen Gemeinden* (Zürich: Zwingli Verl., 1963), 61f.

[661] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. II (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 380.

[662] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 151. Also see Ingo Herrmann, *Kyrios und Pneuma: Studien zur Christologie der paulinischen Hauptbriefe* (Munich: Kösel, 1961).

with God with his entire person and is also with us in a different way, a divine manner. The title '*Kyrios*' is used to describe the present resurrected Lord who is with God and also in the Church through his Spirit (2 Cor 3:17).

3.2.3.3 Jesus' Resurrection: Salvific and Redemptive

The resurrection of Jesus has a universal implication because it is a redemptive act, an act that saves the world from sin and death. From the Catholic point of view, it is the culminating event in the history of salvation and one of the essential central mysteries of the Christian faith.[663] Therefore, it must be seen and understood in a universal perspective because it is a universal event, affecting humanity and the world at large.

Nevertheless, when accounts narrating the climax of the resurrection are examined, one comes across a most severe anticlimax. The description is completed in just few verses and moreover, the women at the tomb, who receive the message of the resurrection, are not cheerful, but rather filled with "fear and amazement," and in spite of instructions to spread this message, they say "nothing to anyone."[664]

In the words of Kasper, the resurrection of Jesus, which is certainly not an isolated or unestablished event, is "the beginning and the anticipation of the general resurrection of the dead"[665] (*Anfang und Vorwegnahme*). St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians shows how Christ, raised from the dead, is the first fruit of those who have died (1 Cor 15:20), and indicates further, what the risen Christ does: "He must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25).[666] Leslie Houlden, retired Professor of theology at King's College, London, tries to explain how Jesus Christ "is the hinge on which salvation hangs." Alluding to St. Paul's letter to the Romans 4:25, Houlden maintains that the resurrection of Jesus is an event that "has altered everything: it explains the past and fulfils it; it has transformed the present; it is the first fruit and assurance of the future consummation."[667]

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[663] Universal salvation in and through Jesus Christ is till date a disputed topic, specially when the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ is being discussed and more on this issue will be dealt in the final chapter.

[664] Houlden, "The Resurrection: History, Story and Belief," 55

[665] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 154.

[666] Cf. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 162.

[667] Houlden, "The Resurrection: History, Story and Belief," 61-62.

A considerable number of scholars, including Moltmann, speak about the 'hope' element in the resurrection narratives. Kasper maintains that without belief in the resurrection, everything that happened in the life of Jesus could be understood and remembered only as ill-fate of an innocent victim, a cause for resignation and scepticism, but never as a reason for hope.[668] Christopher Rowland maintains that "the Resurrection is part and parcel of Christian hope and is itself at the very centre of New Testament faith and practise." This hope "for the transformation of society should be at the centre of Christian theology, and it should not be dismissed as a fringe-phenomenon… Unless the Resurrection means the transformation of the world in actual practise today it ends up as a tempting ideology, which may even blind us to the suffering and injustice in God's world."[669] Therefore, Kasper rightly opines that, faith in the resurrection and the hope in the transforming power of God, gives this event a salvific value.

Contemporary scholarship, considering God as the sovereign source of all life, acknowledges that "the Father's will transcends the processes of sin, suffering and death which ravage his creation, and that it aims at a renewal of the creation which Jesus anticipated in his ministry. Out of the transcendent future of God's kingdom, Jesus is seen as bringing new possibilities of God's forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, provision of daily needs, victory over evil, peace with the natural world."[670] Although, Jesus' resurrection had failed to conform to the Jewish hope of resurrection, Bauckham maintains: "He rose uniquely ahead of all others *because* he rose uniquely *for* all others."[671] Kasper confirms that it is "in and through Jesus, God's love is now finally addressed to all men."[672]

Kasper tries to show how recent studies have also tried to understand the resurrection-event not just as a part of the story of Jesus, but also as part of the story of everyone who becomes a part of Jesus' story. Loughlin puts it succinctly: "To enter the story of Jesus is to begin to share in his identity, as the one who-was-dead-but-is-risen, the one who-cannot-not-live. And this life in the life of Christ is redemption from slavery to sin, it is

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[668] Cf. Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 238.
[669] Rowland, "Interpreting the Resurrection," 83-84.
[670] Richard Bauckham, "God Who Raises the Dead: The Resurrection of Jesus and Early Christian Faith in God," in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1993), 144.
[671] Bauckham, "God Who Raises the Dead," 149.
[672] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 155.

salvation."[673] That is what soteriology means – the theology of salvation which seeks to explain how the story of Jesus has saved mankind, how Jesus has transformed life and how 'Jesus saves.'[674]

In the light of Jesus' resurrection, Kasper and Moltmann have tried to explain that hope and love can be as strong as death, because victory of life over death is already experienced in love. Where the Spirit is experienced as present, the body and soul become once more a unity. The divisions hostile to life, and the conflicts addicted to death, are overcome.[675] But Kasper further maintains that all hostility and opposition to God will only end when God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28), and therefore Kasper stresses the eschatological dimension of the Jesus' resurrection – destruction of all evil powers and victory of life.

Kasper also identifies an inner dimension to the hope of the resurrection: an inner driving force, that 'sets a Christian on the way of the cross… the way of actual bodily obedience in daily life (cf. Rom 12:1),' not to be seen, however, as contempt for the world. To Kasper, hope in eternal life means respect for life and creation, and a loving atmosphere that should result, towards all that is living and alive.[676] Kasper further believes that the entire humanity can, through the resurrection of Jesus, enter this new reality, especially by faith and baptism. Terms like life, justice, redemption, peace forgiveness, etc., may be used to describe this new mode of being in Christ. For our times, Kasper suggests the term 'Christian Freedom' as fitting, because it gives us a foretaste of this reality, which is fairly actualised for us in history.[677]

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[673] Gerard Loughlin, "Living in Christ: Story, Resurrection and Salvation," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa, 127.

[674] See Michael Root, "The Narrative Structure of Soteriology," in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 263-278.

[675] Moltmann, 'The Resurrection of Christ: Hope for the World," 83-85.

[676] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 155. It is Kasper's belief that only that which is done with love will endure forever (1 Cor 13:8), and is inscribed in the condition and growth of reality, and the power of this love is seen in its endurance and persistence in trials and tribulations (2 Cor 4:8-10). The climax of God's love is the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

[677] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 155-158. Like St. Paul, Kasper also understands freedom as freedom from sin (freedom from external and internal pressure which actually enslave men); freedom from death (death here is seen as wages of sin (cf. Rom 6:23; 5:12-21); and freedom from law (even the fulfilment of the law can sometimes be an occasion of self-glorification instead of divine glorification (cf. Rom 7:8; 2:23).

Salvation must have priority, because Jesus did not come to judge, but to save the world (Jn 3:17; 12:47), and therefore, "all those who believe in Jesus become 'sons of light.'"[678] Romano Guardini makes it explicitly clear:

> It is the Resurrection that brings ultimate clarity to what is known as salvation. Not only does it reveal who God is, who we are, and what sin really means; not only does it indicate the way to new accomplishment for the children of God… resurrection consists of the transformation of the totality of our being, spirit and flesh, by the recreative power of God's love.[679]

Kasper associates this concept of redemption and bodily renewal, with the consumption of the cosmos which is not just a "successive gathering-in and bringing-in of time into eternity… a creative act of God through Jesus Christ, the lord of history, who has been raised to the right hand of God."[680] In the words of Ratzinger, redemption is a gracious act of God in Jesus Christ, an act of transforming humanity into a state of being something new and acceptable to God.[681]

Kasper sees the resurrection of Jesus, like other christological mysteries, within the whole economy of salvation. The creation of the world and man, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the final resurrection of man,[682] and the eschatological transformation and consummation of the whole of creation (Rom 8:19-23, 1 Cor 15:42-49) are all related, and are to be understood as part of the one salvific plan of God.[683] Kasper finally maintains that though the resurrection event belongs to a particular time in the world history, yet, it has a definite message of hope for humanity even today and a universal salvific value.

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[678] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. II, 396.
[679] Guardini, *The Lord*, 413-414.
[680] Kasper, "Hope in the Final Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory," 379.
[681] See Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), 157, 170.
[682] Pope St. John Paul II taught that resurrection perfects the person as it includes the whole personal subjectivity of man. The Spirit of God permeates the whole psychosomatic subjectivity of man. Thus, resurrection reveals the real and new meaning of the body. For more on this see the writing of Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 241.
[683] Cf. Chalakkal, *The Post-Resurrection Appearances in Contemporary Catholic Christology*, 40-41.

3.2.4 Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus Today

How could resurrection be understood today, it being an unusual event in the history of the world? Generally understood and as historical positivism contends, "All events are in principle repeatable – classified as recurring instants… Normality presupposes repeatability and analogy."[684] This concludes that a unique event without repeatability or analogy cannot be registered in the narratives of historical positivism. This principle then, does not consider events like incarnation and resurrection as something general and normal, but classifies them as merely mythological.

Kasper however remarks, that the "historical phenomena are understood in context and by analogy with other events. Where this understanding of factual reality is absolute, there is no place for the reality of the Resurrection, which cannot be explained by reference to context or by analogy with the rest of reality."[685] The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a unique event and constitutes a special uniqueness, which Hans Urs von Balthasar formulates as something that "pierces our whole world of living and dying in a unique way so that, through this breakthrough, it may open a path for us into the everlasting life of God".[686]

The resurrection of Jesus not only created hope in the disciples, but it also gradually increased their number. The 'resurrection' itself is not described in any of the Gospels. It has been withdrawn from human eyes and it belongs solely to the mystery of God.[687] Gerard Loughlin, Professor of Theology and Religion at the University of Durham, England, understands resurrection of Jesus as a mystery of God's life, which is today seen through the Gospel narratives and in the readings of the Church. He states, "The risen life of Christ is present in the gathering of the people who recall before God the promise that they will be called again by him who has already gone on ahead and is coming to meet them, who is already with them in the breaking of the bread and the passing of the cup. This is the way of love to the one who was dead but is alive, who is life itself, now and forever more."[688]

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[684] Loughlin, "Living in Christ," 122.

[685] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 130.

[686] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 194.

[687] Cf. Päpstliche Bibelkommission, „Inspiration und Wahrheit der Heiligen Schrift," 190.

[688] Loughlin, "Living in Christ," 125.

Kasper sees the presence of the resurrected Christ from a new dimension. The risen Lord continues the eschatological apostolate of the earthly Jesus through his presence in a new way, namely, in the sign of the meal. For Kasper, the Eucharist takes the central place, in addition to the Word, and here a genuine encounter is possible with the risen Lord. He maintains that Jesus was not only "'raised into the kerygma,' but that he 'rose again in the liturgy.'"[689] The resurrected Christ hereby rebuilds the Eucharistic community that was interrupted through his passion and death, and the resurrection of Jesus re-establishes the community through forgiveness of sins and the assurance of the eschatological Shalom.

For Hans Wilhelm Frei, known for biblical hermeneutics, and especially for his interpretation of narratives, the identity of Jesus comes to its "sharpest focus in the death-and-resurrection sequence taken as one unbroken sequence."[690] The identity-question of Jesus in Mk 8:27 has a complete answer in the resurrection because it is there that it is made manifest as to who Jesus is: obscure on the cross and luminous in the resurrection.

Today, the focus on the importance of the resurrection of Jesus has mostly remained at the physical and the historical level. The spiritual element of the resurrection of Jesus has not attained sufficient importance. Osborne maintains that, "the renewed theological scholarship on the resurrection understands the seeing, hearing and touching of Jesus' risen body to be secondary issues; even the empty tomb is a secondary issue."[691] The belief in the resurrection of Jesus is a catholic and divine faith, *de fide catholica et divina*. Besides, belief in the resurrection of Jesus and also the bodily resurrection of every person is central to Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning and the anticipation of the resurrection of the dead[692] since he is the "first fruit of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20; Col 1:18; Acts 26:23; Rev 1:17f). Kasper believes that today:

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[689] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 158.

[690] Hans Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 59.

[691] Kenan B. Osborne, *The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for its Theological Interpretation* (New York: Pauline Press, 1997), 105.

[692] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 154. Cf. Karl Barth, *Die Auferstehung der Toten. Eine akademische Vorlesung über 1. Kor. 15* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evang. Verl., 1953); Papst Benedikt XVI, *Auferstehung und ewiges Leben. Beiträge zur Eschatologie und zur Theologie der Hoffnung*, Gesammelte Schriften, Band X, ed. Gerhard Ludwig Müller (Freiburg: Herder, 2012); Geert van Oyen, ed., *Resurrection of the Dead. Biblical Traditions in Dialogue* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012); Kurt Anglet, *Auferstehung und Vollendung* (Würzburg: Echter, 2014).

> The Church itself is an eschatological phenomenon insofar as in all precedence it shares in the eschatological and ultimate nature of the new history opened up with the Resurrection… the Church is indestructible or indefectible. Church will always be. But the Church is only the Church of Jesus Christ only as long as it persists in faith in Jesus Christ the Crucified and the Resurrected… The saving truth of God is permanently granted to the world by Jesus Christ in and through the Church. Christ is lastingly present in history in the Church's proclamation of faith and doctrine, in its liturgy in its sacraments and in its whole life.[693]

In this way, Kasper believes that the Church today should engage herself in proclaiming the lasting presence of Jesus Christ in the world and keep alive the hope of individual resurrection, because sharing in the resurrection means sharing in the life of God.

Concluding Remarks

Christological interest in the resurrection of Jesus actually saw a major development only towards the beginning of the twentieth century, as the historical-critical biblical scholarship gained significant importance. Kasper has made a genuine attempt not only to discuss the issue of the resurrection from the historical point of view, but has also tried to enumerate the spiritual components, highlighting thereby the redemptive and the eschatological constituents of Jesus' resurrection. Along with Küng and Kessler, Kasper has succeeded in considering the resurrection of Jesus in relation with other christological mysteries.

The mystery Jesus' resurrection is to be celebrated, meditated and lived, as Kasper often emphasises that Jesus is raised by God for us and through his resurrection, he is always present with us. Jesus was personally delivered from the power of death when his earthly body was transformed into a glorified existence. He is today present in the Church (Mt 18:20; 28:20) in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the proclamation of the Word and in the celebration of the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist (Lk 24:30-32; Jn 21:12-13). Thus Kasper proves the ultimate seal and approval of God on the life and works of his Son. Finally, for Kasper, Jesus' resurrection is the triumphant end of the death on the cross, and has a universal dimension. It is more than a unique complete event, offering a future to the present world.

[693] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 159.

PART III: THE TITLES OF JESUS
JESUS CHRIST – THE SON OF GOD

Introduction

A quick glance at the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, reveals one undeniable truth, that Jesus was prized with a myriad of titles. Kasper argues that even though Jesus had many titles, none among them have succeeded in presenting a complete image of Jesus. In his own words, „*es reicht kein einzelner Titel aus, um zu sagen wer Jesus ist.*"[694] Not a single title is so comprehensive that it describes or recounts the personality of Jesus in its totality, and hence, all these titles face the problem of inadequacy, paucity and meagreness. Kasper agrees with Piet Schoonenberg who opines that the titles of Jesus are in a troublesome dilemma. The belief that Jesus is God and man, and the understanding of the doctrine of two natures in one person Jesus Christ, is now subject to scrutiny.[695] Schoonenberg fears that the nucleus of our faith is at stake. The christological dogmas relating to the God-man Jesus, which were later defined especially in the Council of Chalcedon, have become points of departure for classical Christology in the Church.[696] Jesus Christ as Son of God – what does this confession mean today and how can it be rightly interpreted?

3.3.1 The Son of God: Old Testament Antecedents

Jesus, the Son of God, is one of the many titles of Jesus that apparently proved to be the most relevant and suitable, but however, disputed. The title Son of God, Wright maintains, "is a notoriously fluid title in early Christianity. It is all too easy to jump to conclusions about what it meant to the original writers and their first readers."[697] The confession of Jesus Christ as being the Son of God serves as a brief code or formula (*kurzformel*) which virtually brings to expression the fundamentals of Christian faith. It is

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[694] Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, 191; idem, *Jesus the Christ*, 163; idem, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 203.

[695] For more reading on this issue see, Walter Kasper, „Die Gottesfrage als Problem der Verkündigung: Aspekt der systematischen Theologie," in *Von Gott Sprechen*, ed. Franz Georg Friemel (Leipzig: Benno Verlag, 1991), 87.

[696] Cf. Piet Schoonenberg, *The Christ: A Study of God-Man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ*, trans. Della Couling (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 50-51.

[697] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 724.

for this reason that the Christian faith stands and falls with the confession of Jesus as being the Son of God. One needs to rightly grasp and understand the meaning of this title if one has to answer the questions that Kasper poses at the very beginning of his christological investigation: "Who is Jesus Christ? Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"[698] Since this title 'Son of God' has its roots in the history of Israel, it is fitting therefore, that the Old Testament understanding of this concept be taken as the starting point.

The designation 'Son of God' used in the Scriptures especially in the Gospels, reminds the reader at the very outset, of the relationship between Jesus and God. However, throughout history, emperors also have assumed titles like 'a son of god,' 'a son of a god' or 'a son of Heaven.' Roman Emperor Augustus is said to have referred to his relation to the deified adoptive father, Julius Caesar, as 'son of a god' (*divi filius*, son of divinity). This designation was later also used by Domitian, the third and last emperor of the Flavian dynasty. However, it must be noted that the usage of this title in the New Testament is quite distinct.[699]

Israel, being chosen by God and because of its special relationship with God, became God's firstborn son. However, it is important to understand the broader sense, its deeper relevance and proper significance. In the broadest sense, everyone could be called children of God without excluding anybody. But Israel, because of its exclusive dedication to the Lord, became the firstborn of God.[700] Son of God is a phrase used widely in the ancient world. At this point a brief reference to this survey would be helpful.[701]

a) Some of the legendary heroes of Greek mythology were called sons of God – in particular, Dionysus and Heracles were sons of Zeus, albeit by mortal mothers.[702]
b) The Oriental rulers, especially Egyptian, were also called sons of God. In particular, the Ptolemies of Egypt laid claim to the title 'son of Helios,' and at the time of Jesus, 'son of god' was already widely used while referring to Augustus.

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[698] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 15.

[699] Cf. Warren Cater, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2001), 69.

[700] Cf. Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1992), 105.

[701] Cf. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospel* (London: Collins, 1973), 192-200.

[702] Cf. T. Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 170-178.

c) Famous philosophers like Pythagoras and Plato were sometimes spoken of as having been begotten by a god (Apollo)[703] and in Stoic philosophy Zeus, the Supreme Being, was thought of as father of all men.[704]

d) Angels or heavenly beings were also called 'the sons of God' under Yahweh, the supreme God (Gen 6:2, 4; Deut 32:8; Job 1:6-12; Dan 3:25).

e) Israel or Israelites – 'Israel is my first-born son' (Ex 4:22; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1).

f) Israel, individually, not always Israel as a whole, and especially a righteous man was also called 'son of God' (Wis 2:13; Sir 4:10; 51:10).

g) The Maccabean Martyrs were called 'children of heaven' (2 Macc 7:34) and even all those who did what was pleasing to nature.

G. P. Wetter[705] discussing the issue on the 'Son of God' identifies its origin in ancient oriental religions which considered kings to be begotten of gods, a belief that was common in Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. As mentioned above, even in the New Testament era Roman emperors, as mentioned earlier, were entitled as *divi filius*.[706] This was a claim which was deeply rooted in the polytheistic religious setting in the history of Israel. Hence, applying this title to Jesus in a unique sense, which means, transferring it from the polytheistic setting to monotheistic scenario was found to be difficult.

In Kasper's viewpoint, this title 'Son of God' is based on the election of Israel as God's chosen people but however, this is a free and gracious choice, with a special mission, purely functional and personal, but however, not natural.[707] St. Augustine wrote at length on the 'Son of God' and its relationship with the 'Son of Man' positioning the two titles in terms of the dual nature of Jesus, in terms of the hypostatic union. He says: "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is God and Man: God before all worlds, man in our world... But

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[703] Cf. Herbert Braun, „Der Sinn der neutestamentlichen Christologie," *ZThK* 54 (1957): 341-377.

[704] Cf. Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 24.

[705] Cf. Gills Peterson Wetter, *Der Sohn Gottes: Eine Untersuchung über den Charakter und die Tendenz des Johannes-Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1916). See also Walter Grundmann, *Die Gotteskindschaft in der Geschichte Jesu und ihre religionsgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Weimar: Deutsche Christen Verlag, 1938).

[706] Cf. Adolf Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistich-römischen Welt*, fourth edition (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), 294; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Christuskult und Kaiserkult* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1919).

[707] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 164. Cf. Werner Schlisske, *Gottessöhne und Gottessohn im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973).

since he is the only Son of God, by nature and not by grace, he became also the Son of Man that he might be full of grace as well."[708]

The open question still deliberated is - did this designation 'Son of God' when used of Jesus, always denote deity, signifying Jesus' pre-existent divinity? Why was it applied to Jesus especially by the earliest Christians? What made the first disciples call Jesus 'Son of God'?

3.3.1.1 Jesus and the 'Son of God': A Shift in the New Testament

None of the other titles addressed to Jesus Christ has had both the historical depth and lasting power than the title 'Son of God.' Questions are often asked like: Did Jesus ever think of, or understand himself, to be the Son of God? Was Jesus conscious of such a title? What about the significance of this designation? The entire issue of Jesus' self-consciousness and the significance of this title 'Son of God' have always remained in the forefront of christological study, for more than the past two centuries.[709] Opinions regarding the consciousness of Jesus differ, and an attempt to draw a definitive conclusion seems to be very tough. Satan's use of the phrase "If you are the Son of God…" (Mt 4:3, 6; Lk 4:3, 9)[710] in the first two attempts during the temptation of Jesus, seems to force on Jesus a political, messianic role. Kasper maintains that the belief of the early Church, although influenced by the Old Testament, that Jesus is the Son of God, however, cannot be repudiated.

Dunn has debated this issue in four phases.[711] The first phase, the starting point for the debate, poses a great problem in terms of Jesus' consciousness of divinity, or, the classical two-nature doctrine of his person. The difficulty in answering this issue is the complexity of conceiving a simultaneous co-existence of two natures in one person. Although Schleiermacher felt that the answer must be negative, Henry Parry Liddon

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[708] Ausgustine of Hippo, *The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion of Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. Bruce Harbert (New York: New City Press, 2008), 68.

[709] Cf. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 22-23.

[710] See Joachim Bieneck, *Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker* (Lübbenau: Zwingli Verlag, 1951), 64. It correctly explains the reason why the phrase 'If you are the Son of God' is not repeated in the third attempt in Matthew. Satan demands an act of subjection here, whereas in the first two temptations he demands an act of power.

[711] For more details on these four phases, see Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 22-25.

found absolutely no difficulty in reaffirming the classic position of Jesus' consciousness, stating boldly, that in John 8:58 Jesus unveils a consciousness of Eternal Being.[712]

In the second phase, the question asked pertains to Jesus' messianic consciousness. If, on the one hand, some denied that Jesus had any consciousness of messiahship, a great bulk of Liberal Protestants scholarship in the later decades of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th affirmed with confidence, Jesus' messianic consciousness.[713]

The work of William Wrede marked the emergence of the third phase.[714] The question tackled here was: How can we, after more than 2000 years, place ourselves in the settings of those times, and enter into the mind of one, from whom we have nothing direct and most of whose sayings are uncertain as to original context and form?[715] There was a widespread feeling, that even if one could talk of 'consciousness of divinity' or 'messianic consciousness' one could never hope to uncover it by historical-critical methods.

A fourth phase could be distinguished as, emerging most clearly in the past few years, where scholars attempted to reclaim older positions. P. Stuhlmacher, pupil and successor of E. Käsemann, affirmed the authenticity of such crucial *logia* as Mk 10:45 and 14:62 as words of the historical Jesus, and also maintained the historicity of Mt 11:2-6; Lk 7:18-23. Joachim Jeremias succeeded in bringing back the question of the sonship of Jesus to the centre of the debate.[716] Jesus' address to God as *abba* (Father), which has been discussed in the previous chapter, can be considered as widely accepted evidence that established this father-son relationship.

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[712] Henry Liddon, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (UK: Kessinger Publishing, 2007). This book contains eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford, in the year 1866 on the foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton, canon of Salisburg and Lecture IV titled 'Our Lord's Divinity as Witnessed by his Consciousness' gives a very good understanding of Jesus' consciousness (154-207). Cf. also Schleiermacher, *The Life of Jesus*, ed. Jack C. Verheyden (Ramsey, NJ: Sigler Press, 1997).

[713] Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien: ihr Ursprung und geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863), 492-496; A. C. Headlam, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Christ* (London: John Murray, 1923).

[714] The significance of this feature of the sources was first emphasised in modern terms by William Wrede, The Task and Method of "New Testament Theology" (1897). See for English translation by Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 68-116.

[715] Cf. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007).

[716] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 9-30; idem, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 11-65.

Kasper clearly indicates a dramatic shift in the use and understanding of this title in the New Testament. Instances where Jesus himself uses this title to claim his adoptive sonship are not explicitly found. The divine sonship of Jesus is however, to be understood "not as supra-historical essence, but as reality which becomes effective in and through the history and fate of Jesus."[717] Do the Synoptic Gospels draw any firm and definitive conclusions about Jesus' consciousness of his sonship and his understanding of his relationship with God?

Jeremias has shown that *abba* (Father) was a characteristic feature of Jesus' prayers. Only two references to an *abba*-prayer in the literature of the early Christians (Rom 8:15f; Gal 4:6), reflect on the Spirit of the Son, "the Spirit who gives believers a share in his sonship."[718] Hence, it could be concluded that this characteristic feature of Jesus' prayer and address to his Father, affirmed the awareness of Jesus' role as the Son of God with a special mission.

Pannenberg, at this point, has a very significant contribution to make. He maintains that it can be assumed that Jesus knew himself functionally to be one with God's will in pre-actualising the future, and thus to be one with God himself. Thus Pannenberg concludes that "one cannot properly understand Jesus' Sonship without taking his relation to God the Father as the point of departure."[719] Jesus' relationship to the Father as Son has been also brought into the centre of Christology, especially by Friedrich Gogarten, who sees Jesus as the "Son of God precisely in his humanity."[720]

It may be concluded therefore, that there are sufficient sayings and speech mannerisms of Jesus which clearly indicate and uncover his self-consciousness. However, it is wrong and also impossible according to Kasper, to conclude that Jesus became the Son of God only through resurrection (as argued by Bultmann). At the same time, it would amount to indifference, if it is ignored that the Resurrection and the Exaltation emphatically confirmed this pre-Easter claim of Jesus. Kasper rightly formulates that "Jesus' resurrection is the confirmation, revelation, putting into force, realisation and completion

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[717] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 164, idem, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1965), 58-109.

[718] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 21f.

[719] Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man*, 334.

[720] Cf. Friedrich Gogarten, *Der Mensch zwischen Gott und Welt* (Stuttgart: Vorwerk, 1967), 242. Also see. pages 15-33, 245, 259, 358.

of what Jesus before Easter claimed to be and *was*."[721] Further Pannenberg asserts that, "Christology cannot avoid the question of Jesus' self-consciousness, however difficult it may be exegetically and historically."[722]

Kasper, in an attempt to interpret Jesus' divine sonship and the consciousness of Jesus, emphasises the importance and significance of the cross, especially in Pauline theology. The cross-event is a necessity willed by God, and is at the heart of God's plan for his Son and at the centre of world history. Kasper also observes opposites coming together in the mystery of this cross, since it is in being powerless that God's power is effective; in servitude his mastery, and in death, life. The entire value system is reversed – what the world considers strong and wise is nothing but absurdity, and what it considers folly, foolishness and weakness, is here the embodiment of God's power and wisdom (1 Cor 1:20-31).[723] Ontologically, Kasper opines, the Father and Son are united (Jn 10:30) and Jesus shares in the life of God to bring this divine life to humanity, so that all share in the life of God (Jn 5:25).

3.3.1.2 Kasper and 'Son of God'

At the very outset Kasper opines that except for the title 'Son of Man,' Jesus did not attribute any christological titles to himself and hence he does not think that Jesus called himself 'Son of God.' However, he further notes two implications of the title 'Son of God,' in the theological interpretation. He opines that the proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God does not just serve dogmatic and theological reflections, rather, it reflects more on Jesus' relationship with the Father than between the human Jesus and his divinity. Kasper points out that, when one expresses 'Jesus is God' or 'Jesus is the Son of God,' the copula 'is' has a very special and significant meaning.[724]

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[721] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 165.
[722] Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man*, 326.

[723] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 167-168. These formulations do explain the logic of the cross but in the midst of such contradictories Kasper strongly highlights Christ's sacrifice and self-offering as the basis of the understanding of the mystery of the cross. Cf. Wiard Popkes, *Christus Traditus: Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verl., 1967).

[724] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 220-221.

3.3.1.2.1 Jesus' Eternal Sonship

Scholarly research and investigations on the person and works of Jesus reveal that Jesus was more than an ordinary man. His life, preaching and healing, suffering and dying, rising and ascending, is closely related to the supreme dignity of his being the Son of God. Kasper categorically states that Jesus belongs to the eternal nature of God because through Jesus and in the Holy Spirit, God communicated himself as the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is unfair to reverse the divine Sonship of Jesus, starting from his resurrection back to baptism, and finally to the conception and to his pre-existence. Kasper states clearly that Jesus is the Son of God from Eternity.[725] St. Paul makes this idea clear in Eph 1:3-14 and also in Phil 2:6-11 where he identifies God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus, who in the form of existence of God, has taken the form of existence of servant - *morphe*.[726]

Eternity is defined by Boethius as "the total, simultaneous, and perfect possession of interminable life" (*interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*).[727] Any definition explaining eternity will have to include these four elements: a life, without beginning or end, or succession, and of the perfect kind. Pannenberg has developed this concept of eternity very systematically, concluding finally that eternity is God's time. His action and power extend to everything past and future as to something that, for him, is present.[728] Man's nature is to be in bondage under cosmic powers, and the Christ-event is nothing but dissolving and releasing of this fatal connection, and as new 'cosmocrat'[729] freeing humanity from this bondage, thus taking the position of *Ananke*.[730] Hence, Kasper argues that Jesus' eternal Sonship with the Father has a soteriological element.

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[725] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 172-185; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, third edition (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1969), 155f, 169f; Kramer, *Christos – Kyrios – Gottessohn*, 108-112.

[726] *Morphe* in Greek means external appearance or form. St. Paul, applying this word *morphe* to Jesus did not deny the unchangeable nature of God that Jesus possessed.

[727] William J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius* (1603-1669), trans. Raymond A. Blacketer (Boston: Brill, 2001), 162.

[728] Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 68 -81. Cf. also Herbert Nele, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: de Gruyter, 1978), 109. Pannenberg tries to explain the eternal nature of God in two words: omnipresent and active in history.

[729] Cosmocrat is the ruler or leader of the whole world and is also called as 'cosmocrator.' It stems from the Greek *cosmos*, which means world or universe.

[730] In Greek mythology, *Ananke* was a primordial ancient Greek goddess: the personification of destiny and fate.

Kasper finds a very close relation between the pre-existence of Jesus and his mission. The pre-existence, the descent, the life and death of Jesus is nothing other than God's own way of acting beyond all human reasoning and interpretation. Such an understanding of pre-existence was considered by some as extra-biblical or mythological ideas that invited demythologisation.[731] Some Gnostics have identified Jesus as an embodiment of a supreme being, who became incarnate to bring gnosis to the earth.[732] But the main contention of the New Testament is the interpretation of the unique and particular fate of Jesus Christ, bringer of salvation. Kasper concludes that Jesus is not in need of salvation, either in the Gnostic sense of "*salvator salvatus* or as *salvator salvandus*"[733] because Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

God has unreservedly and definitively revealed himself in and through Jesus. Jesus, Kasper maintains, becomes part of the definition of God's eternal nature; his fate and history being deeply rooted in the nature of God. According to Kasper, "God's becoming man and thus becoming history in Jesus Christ is the surpassing fulfilment of this historical fidelity to his promise that he *is* the one who is present and the one existing with us."[734] John and Johannine literature affirm this fact often, as they frequently call Jesus 'Son' and 'Son of God' (Jn 1:34, 49; 3:16-18, 36; 11:27; 1 John 4:15; 5:12; Rev 2:18).[735] Schnackenburg, like Kasper, identified the Son standing in such close relationship with the Father, that "the 'Father-son relationship' is the key to the

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[731] The necessity of demythologisation and contributions of Bultmann and his school has been discussed in the first chapter. (See 1.3.3.2)

[732] Gnosis is a Greek word signifying spiritual knowledge and not intellectual or theoretical. Some even call it as a religion of knowledge. Gnostics believe that the material world was created by a god named Demiurge, a lesser god and that this Demiurge is the god of Christianity and Judaism. Deliverance of a human person from the bondage of this world is possible only through spiritual enlightenment.

[733] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 174. Humanity is victim of evil, and hence, destined to be liberated as they are not themselves liberators. A particular union of the two types in the figure of the *Erlöste Erlöser*, *Salvator salvatus* or better as Colpe suggests, of *salvator salvandus*, *der zu erlösende Erlöser*, is to be found in Gnosticism, which identifies heavenly beings who have also fallen a victim to material force and the heavenly messenger awakens him to gnosis. Cf. also C. Colpe, *Die religiongeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnotischen Erlösermythus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprech, 1961).

[734] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 175. See also Gerhard Delling, *Das Zeitverständnis des Neuen Testaments* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1940).

[735] More on this theme cf. M. Hengel, *The Cross and the Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 1-90; G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Paebody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2007), 530-557.

understanding of Jesus as portrayed by the evangelist (John) and of his words and actions as interpreted by him."[736]

Kasper asserts the fact that the designation 'Jesus, the Son of God,' and his eternal and divine sonship, are the distinguishing marks of Christianity. As quoted earlier, he argues that Christian faith has Jesus, the Son of God, as its foundation.[737] Kasper identifies a concrete historical exposition and elucidation of the divine Sonship of Jesus in the Pauline literature, especially in his theology of the cross. Kasper further contends that Jesus belongs to the eternal nature of God since God has definitively and concretely revealed himself through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, defining himself as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."[738] Hence, he logically concludes that Jesus is part of the definition of God's eternal nature and in and through Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, God has not only fulfiled his promises of old, but he is also concretely present to humanity and is one with his creation.

3.3.1.2.2 *Homoousios*: One in Being with the Father

The mystery of the person of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, has been approached from two angles – the humanity of Christ and the divinity of the Son of God. These two avenues gave rise to two schools – Antiochian and the Alexandrian, both having the burden of showing that Christ is truly God and truly man. Meanwhile, two errors gradually cropped up: Nestorianism, which denied the unity of the person, and Monophysitism, which denied the duality of his natures. The great christological Councils of the fifth century faced the challenge and task of expressing in unequivocal terms the mysterious union of the two natures in one person.[739]

The key concept of christological doctrine, formulated at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea in 325, was the affirmation that God the Father, and God the Son, are of the same substance. The Council was convened to resolve the controversy within the Church over

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[736] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol II, 172.

[737] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 163.

[738] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 172. Cf. also Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man.*

[739] Cf. Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*. See especially the Council of Ephesus (431) and the General Council of Chalcedon (451). See also David W. Dorries, *Spirit-Filled Christology: Merging Theology and Power* (San Diego: Aventine Press, 2006), 85-89.

the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. It condemned Arianism for its heretical teaching that Christ was more than human, but not fully divine. The definition of *homoousios* (Greek *ὁμοούσιος*, 'of one substance,' or 'of one essence') was meant to put an end to the controversy, but the rebirth of Arianism could not be avoided, and was finally resolved in 381, by the First Council of Constantinople (second ecumenical council), by formulating a creed (also containing the word *homoousios*) that became the definitive statement of orthodox belief.[740]

Kasper clear maintains that the Church bases its faith not on private speculation, but on common and public tradition. Tradition is not to be understood as a dead letter, but as a living entity. To Kasper, the new ontological statements are not meant to make void the salvation statements, but to help to safeguard them. He says:

> The real object of the ontological statements interpreting tradition on the true divinity of Jesus is to say that the Son belongs not to the side of creatures, but on the side of God; consequently he is not created but begotten and on the same being (*homoousios*) as the Father… The term was meant solely to make clear that the Son is by nature divine and is on the same plane of being as the Father, so that anyone who encounters him, encounters the Father himself.[741]

In spite of the prominent slogan '*Athanasius contramundum*' (Athanasius against the world) schemed by Arians to falsify Athanasius' reputation, the orthodoxy of the Nicene Creed eventually triumphed over the error of Arianism with the use of the word '*homoousious*' (Latin *unius substantiae* (*quod Graeci dicunt homousion*)).[742] If Christ is not true God, then humanity is not redeemed, for only the immortal God can redeem humanity which is subject to death and give it a share in his fullness of life. The divinity of Jesus, Kasper believes, is to be understood within the scope of the early Church's

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[740] Cf. Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*. See section "Symbols and Professions of Faith," nos. 7 and 12.

[741] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 176. More on this dogmatic definition see also Walther Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des christlichen Selbstbewusstseins*, Vol. I (Von den Anfängen bis zur Reformation), third edition (Zürich: Niehans, 1951); Martin Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1959); Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ephesus und Chalcedon* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1963); Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*; Benedikt XVI, *Das Problem der Dogmengeschichte in der Sicht der katholischen Theologie* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verl., 1966); Alois Grillmeier und Heinrich Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon, Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. I (Der Glaube von Chalkedon), fourth edition (Würzburg: Echter, 1973).

[742] Cf. Dorries, *Spirit-Filled Christology*, 78-80.

Soteriology. He further understands the idea of redemption as the expiation from sin which further leads in the deification of man.

Karl Barth argures that, to the question 'Who is the Son of God?' the world usually has a provisional answer – the repetition of the creed. Jesus Christ is the one who reveals the Father and the one who reconciles us to the Father; he is the Son of God. Barth tries to answer this question, unveiling concretely the oneness of their being.

> The dogma of the Trinity adds something new to this insight from Scripture's witness to revelation only to the extent that it adds the interpretation that Jesus Christ can reveal the Father and reconcile us to the Father because He reveals Himself as the One He is… the event of revelation has divine truth and reality because that which is proper to God is revealed in it, because Jesus Christ reveals Himself as the One He already was before, apart from this event, in Himself too… Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God Himself as God His Father is God Himself.[743]

Kasper highlights the binding force of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, also called as Nicene Creed or Symbol of Faith. This Creed, according to him till date, is the official liturgical profession of faith of the Church and of her believers. This creedal formula has become the universally accepted statement through which the Church confesses the being and nature of God and Jesus Christ. It confirms one truth – what God is in his essence, Jesus Christ is also, since Jesus is the Son of God. Kasper further argues that God is not a purely speculative idea but in the Son, he is a God of men and for men, thus emphasising the deeper significance of the pre-existence of God. He finally concludes that God as the God of Jesus Christ is a God who exists eternally, and in his Son from eternity, he is also God of history.[744]

3.3.1.2.3 Jesus: Son of God and Messiah

Was Jesus conscious that he is the Messiah? Did Jesus claim to be the Christ? Was he attributed with these titles or was he a self-proclaimed Messiah? These questions, being part of the christological discussions, are to be investigated and examined deeper. The

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[743] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Vol. I, Part 1, second edition, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1995), 414.

[744] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 184-185.

translation of the Hebrew word *Mašíaḥ* as Χριστός (*Khristós*) in the Greek Septuagint became the accepted Christian designation and a second proper name of Jesus. It is quite certain that Jesus was confronted with this title, and he even provoked his disciples with questions pertaining to the Messiah. However, Schoonenberg observes that Jesus "never appropriated this title without reserve."[745] Jesus even forbade his disciples to proclaim that he is the Christ.

With the title Messiah, the Old Testament actually denotes hope in the one who is going to bring salvation.[746] A gradual transition is seen in the meaning of this term, in that it is also associated with a king, who is placed alongside, on an equal footing with priests and prophets.[747] From scriptural viewpoint, the establishment of Jesus the Messiah, as 'Son of God' did not necessitate his being born of a virgin. The writer of Mark, for example, uses the term 'Son of God' repetitively, without mentioning anything about the virgin birth of Jesus, to explain this title. Hence, for Mark, the idea of a Royal Messiah being God's adopted Son seems quite natural.[748]

Kasper holds on to the conclusion that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament because he burst asunder all previous hopes – a Messiah not through power, but in the form of service. In this instance Kasper quotes Walter Grundmann, a German Protestant:

> If dominion is a mark of the Messiah, Jesus' dominion takes the form of service. If the Messiah's path of domain leads through struggle and victory, Jesus' path points towards suffering and defeat… In the dominion of service which includes suffering, which comes from thinking God's thoughts… we begin to see the new understanding of Messiahship which prevented Jesus from letting himself be called Messiah, since that title would only have encouraged misunderstanding of his mission.[749]

Kasper, as mentioned earlier, argues that it would be absolutely wrong and impossible to conclude that Jesus became the Son of God only through his resurrection. If the baptism

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[745] Cf. Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 131.
[746] The promise of a future bringer of salvation, arising from the throne of David appears in the following texts: Amos 9:11; Is 9:6-7; 11: 1; Mic 5: 2-4; Jer 33: 15-17; Ezek 37:22-24 and Hag 2:20 f) but in Isaiah, specially in later or Second Isaiah this bringer of salvation is a suffering servant and this is explicit and clear in Is 42: 1-7; 49: 1-9; 50: 4-9 and 52: 13-53).
[747] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 104.
[748] Cf. D. H. Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. A. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 449-60.
[749] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 107. Cf. also Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, 193f.

incident is carefully analysed, it reflects more on the position and the function of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus' resurrection, for Kasper, is the completion and confirmation of what Jesus claimed to be and was, before Easter.[750] Jesus' being is seen as proceeding from the Father to humanity, a Christology that gives expression to God's nature as self-giving love. In expounding the divine Sonship of Christ, Kasper has recourse to St. Paul's theology of the cross which, for him, together with the resurrection, are actions of God's eschatological and definitive self-utterance, God's eschatological saving deeds (1 Cor 1:22-24; 1 Cor 15:3-5; Mk 14:21, 48; Isa 53; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8).

In the Christology of Kasper, the cross is never an absurdity or an object of ridicule but it is God's decree and will. Based on this premise, the Son of God on the cross is not an historical accident, but a necessity willed by God, something which is at the heart of God's plan, as mentioned earlier. Finally, it is on the cross that it is revealed who God is and what the world is. Kasper considers the cross as God's work even though it appears to be a paradox that contradicts human familiar ideas of God.[751] This insight of Kasper as against the Gnostic interpretation defends the theological and dogmatic understanding of the cross and salvation by Jesus Christ, and the messianic mission of the Son of God.

Kasper further identifies Jesus' equality with God in Jesus' obedience, this being the concrete realisation of his being God, and therefore, there is no distinction between him and the Father (Mk 10:18). It should also be noted that the designation *ho theos* is used in the literature of the New Testament to address only the Father, and not, either the Son or the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Son is always addressed without *ho*, and only *theos*.

The Son is then the "image (Rom 8.29; 2 Cor 4.4; Col 1.15) and revelation (1 Jn 1.1f), manifestation (epiphany) (1 Tim 3.16; 2 Tim 1.9f; Tit 3.4) of the Father."[752] As Craig R.

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[750] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 165-166. Kasper argues that the claim at the baptism, 'You are my Son' (Mk 1:11), is in fact a quotation made up from Psalm 2:7 and Is 42:1, and at the Transfiguration, this claim presents Jesus already transformed. Hence, Kasper sees a mixture of two co-related Christologies exist adjacent – Christology of being and Christology of mission.

[751] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 167-168. Kasper sees the cross of Jesus Christ as a necessity willed by God and therefore it is the heart of God's plan which stands at the centre of world history. Also cf. Karl Hermann Schelke, *Die Passion Jesu in der Verkündigung des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Kerle, 1949); Ulrich Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit: Eine exegetische-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Kor.1 und 2* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959); Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 89-147.

[752] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 171.

Koester noted, "God's substance encompasses his being and faithfulness,"[753] and hence, it could be concluded without doubt, that since the Son bears the 'impression' of his Father, Jesus accurately represents the very being of his Father and is indeed the Son of God and Messiah.

Kasper states, that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, even today, is the official liturgical profession of faith of the Church. It remains to the present day, the binding force that unites all great churches of the East and West, though the Council of Nicaea was not the end, but the beginning of a new debate. Rahner aptly formulates it as follows:

> Even today a Catholic theologian should not simply ignore the classical formulations of Catholic theology. It is true that a dogma and its formulation in tradition and the *magisterium* of the Church are not simply the same, but at least in the cases of Christology the traditional formulation is not so easily superseded that we are now in a position to dispense with it.[754]

Kasper has attempted what the early Church Councils did. He has tried to critically examine and discuss the gospel of Jesus Christ as Son of God, to differentiate history and fact from fiction and fable, and thus, to presente the absolute truth about Jesus Christ. In the Son from time eternal, God is a God of men and for men; he is the pre-existence of the Son. In other words, "God as the God of Jesus Christ is a God of men who exists as eternally devoted to man,"[755] and this is no speculative idea. Kasper concludes that Jesus is the part of God's definitive, unreserved and unsurpassable eternal nature. Jesus is therefore, the Son of God in eternity and God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, again, in eternity.[756]

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[753] Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 181.

[754] Karl Rahner, "Christology Today (Instead of a Conclusion)," *CONC* 3 (1982): 73. He further suggests that one of the approaches of a Catholic dogmatic theologian ought to be the use of the old christological formulations and obtain new insights. These new formulations need not and do not have to eliminate the old ones. These new formulations need not have to be obtained merely by a negative criticism or overthrowing of the classical formulations. Such a co-existence between the old and the new, he believes, eventually brings a balance especially in the ordinary Christian's religious consciousness and also in the Church's official proclamation.

[755] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 184. Cf. also Herbert Vorgrimler, *Jesus – Gottes und des Menschen Sohn* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1984).

[756] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 175.

Concluding Remarks

Kasper explicated four ways in which Jesus witnessed his divine Sonship: the preaching of Jesus, unlike rabbis, prophets and teachers before him, Jesus' relationship with sinners and tax collectors, Jesus' choosing of his disciples and finally his address to God as Father.[757] In Jesus Christ, the final definition of the world and man, and the eschatological fullness of time have been attained. Jesus, as the Messiah, becomes the mediator between God and the world and this is a universal Mediatorship: in creation, salvation and reconciliation, and in establishing universal peace. Only in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, does it become clear what 'the way, truth, life and light' mean - attributes that humans really need to strive for. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Kasper had argued that the sayings of the Son of God have not only christological but also a soteriological significance and are God's saving answers to human questions concerning the forgiveness of sins, salvation, justice and love.[758]

To conclude, it could be argued that Kasper has carefully studied the title of Jesus as the 'Son of God,' and has convincingly showed that Jesus enjoys an eternal Sonship since he is one in being with the Father. One who has seen Jesus has seen the Father, because Jesus is the only way to the Father. Kasper has also shown that the Dogmas and the teachings of the Church ratify what Jesus Christ in reality is. Having recourse to the Tradition and the Scriptures, Kasper has grounded his deliberations and affirmed that Jesus is and remains the eternal Son of God.

[757] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 169-171.

[758] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 214.

JESUS CHRIST - THE SON OF MAN

Introduction

In the recent past the designation of Jesus as the 'Son of Man,' like 'Son of God' has been regarded as another difficulty, although it takes centre place in the Gospels. However, this designation of Jesus serves as a key to unlocking some of the important secrets concerning Jesus' life, character, and mission. The preceding as well as recent studies in this area seem to have widened this gulf even further, rendering this title of Jesus as even more problematic. This much-debated issue, at present on a razor's edge, hardly shows any indication of a favourable and acceptable solution. Even Kasper acknowledges this title as problematic and attempts to propose some solutions. One might ask: Do studies on the 'Son of Man' contribute to broadening the knowledge about Jesus? This challenging question has both, 'yes' and 'no' for its answer.

3.3.2 Problems Concerning Studies on the 'Son of Man'

Douglas Hare, an American Writer and New Testament Professor, opines that the use and meaning of the phrase *ho huios tou anthropou*, 'the Son of Man,' is one of the most baffling problems confronting scholars of the New Testament.[759] To Kasper, it appears that today the humanity of Jesus is seen as a mere disguise and staffage or decoration, behind which God speaks and acts.[760] At the very outset, one should enumerate the specific issues that have raised problems regarding this phrase which has a fairly broad significance. The following enumeration will help to understand the complications involved in this title and enable a comprehensive picture of Kasper's perception of the 'Son of Man.' The following list gives a broad picture of different scholarly opinions concerning the issue of the Son of Man.

a) Gêza Vermes, noted authority in Dead Sea Scrolls and the leading scholar in the study of the Historical Jesus proposes, that 'Son of Man' is not a title, let alone a messianic one, but an ordinary Aramaic way of speaking of oneself in certain situations. This proposal leads to the following conclusion that the "Son of Man" in the Gospels can

[759] Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 1.

[760] Cf. Kasper, „Wer ist Jesus Christus für uns heute?" 205.

be explained as a circumlocution for 'I'. Such a stand, no doubt, has been challenged by a couple of scholars, like Jeremias and Fitzmayer.[761]

b) For writers like Leivestad and Lindars, there never existed a concept 'Son of Man' prior to Jesus. James Dunn may be listed here as one of the subscribers to this thought.[762] Since, there was "no Son of Man concept in Judaism prior to Jesus' time," Jesus "could not have had any such apocalyptic figure in mind, when – that is, if, he used the expression."[763]

c) Challenging the above position Higgins has arrived at the conclusion in his book *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* that, "A majority of recent writers continue to support the view that there existed in pre-Christian apocalyptic Judaism a concept of the eschatological Son of man, a transcendent and pre-existent being whose primary function in the End-time would be that of a judge…"[764] and cites as examples H. E. Tödt,[765] E. Jüngel,[766] F. Hahn,[767] D. E. Nineham,[768] Fuller,[769] Barrett,[770] Conzelmann[771] and Teeple.[772]

The ultimate question concerning the issue of the Son of Man is the ultimate question about the person of Jesus himself. Can one, or can one not, know anything about Jesus through the study of the Son of Man? However, all studies on Son of Man are bound to converge in this historical personality, Jesus.

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[761] Cf. Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), 2.

[762] Dunn discusses this issue exclusively from two perspectives – Jewish and Christian answers to the question – Who is this 'Son of Man?' See Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 65-97.

[763] Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, 3.

[764] Agnus John Brockhurst Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3.

[765] Cf. Heinz Eduard Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1965)

[766] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *Paulus und Jesus: eine Untersuchuntg zur Präzisierung der Frage nach dem Ursprung der Christologie*, sixth edition (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986).

[767] Cf. Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (London: Lutterworth, 1969).

[768] Cf. Dennis E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).

[769] Cf. Reginald Horace Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 34-43.

[770] Cf. Charles Kingsley Barrette, *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1967), 32.

[771] Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1969).

[772] Cf. H. M. Teeple, "The Origin of the Son of Man Christology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965): 213-250.

3.3.2.1 The Son of Man: In Ancient Judaism

In addition to the scholars mentioned above, P. Vielhauer also needs a mentioned for his somewhat different thesis. He claimed that, it was not Jesus but the early Church that spoke of him as the coming of the Son of Man; that Jesus himself did not use the term; and that this title was derived from apocalyptic Judaism. Vielhauer was followed by Conzelmann, and Teeple, who denied that Jesus uttered anything about the Son of Man and argued that "the Son of man Christology began in Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, perhaps in Syria, and was derived from Jewish apocalyptic."[773]

While many scholars raise doubts and objections on the existence of the concept of the Son of Man in Judaism, Borsch devotes a major part of his book[774] to showing that the Son of Man and related concepts were widespread and familiar, not only in Judaism, but also in the oriental world at large. C. Colpe's study tries to assert the ultimately non-Israelite origin of the Son of Man concept and delineates some salient features of the Son of Man:

a) The Son of Man is a heavenly saviour whose standard or ensign, 'the sign of the Son of man,' the people of God will rally to.
b) The Son of Man will appear suddenly and unexpectedly.
c) His coming is not a coming to earth, but his appearing in the court of judgement in heaven, where his function is primarily that of judge alongside God, the supreme judge.
d) The Son of Man's appearing on his 'day' is the signal for the inauguration of the judgement.
e) The Son of Man does not come to earth. Nor is he, in agreement with the Jewish apocalyptic, exalted to heaven.[775]

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[773] Cf. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus*, 3.
[774] Cf. Frederick Houk Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (London: SCM, 1967).
[775] Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus*, 11.

3.3.2.2 The Similitudes of Enoch

The book of Enoch, also called as 1 Enoch, is an ancient Jewish religious work ascribed to Enoch, the grandfather of Noah.[776] In Daniel's dream (Chapter 7) of the four beasts and its interpretation, there is the corporate interpretation of the concept of an individual, transcendent agent of redemption which appears in 2 Esdras 13 and in 1 Enoch 37-71 (Similitudes).[777] R. Leivestad argues that in Judaism the expression 'Son of Man' was "neither intended nor understood as a messianic title," and even "Jesus' use of the term Son of Man as a self-designation was neither titular nor messianic."[778] The Similitudes, Gêza Vermes opines, are post-Christian and therefore, not qualified as a source for Jewish thought in the time of Jesus and hence concludes that "since Enoch's *son of man* never talks, this work exhibits no structural similarity to the Gospel usage of the term, for there the phrase is always part of the direct speech."[779]

Norman Perrin attempts to argue and overthrow as erroneous, the widespread assumption of a Jewish apocalyptic concept of a transcendent, pre-existent, heavenly Son of Man, the judge at the End-time, focussing upon the imagery in the relevant text.[780] On the other hand, most European and American scholars continue to argue and uphold the pre-Christian Jewish origin of the Similitudes.

Ferdinand Hahn claims that the absence of the Similitudes from the Qumran texts does in no way justify rejection of pre-Christian composition, and that, like the first-century 2 Esdras, they utilise an old apocalyptic tradition.[781] Vielhauer emphasises that the importance of the absence of the Similitudes from the Qumran sectarians' writings should not be exaggerated, as if their collection of books could be expected to aim at completeness, like that of a modern central library. It would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that their absence implies their non-existence at the time. Until proved

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[776] This first book is divided into 2. Book of Watchers: 1 Enoch 1-31 and Book of Parables: 1 Enoch 32-71. Besides, there are two other books named 'Enoch' - 2 Enoch, surviving only in old Slavonic and 3 Enoch surviving in Hebrew.

[777] Thomas Walter Manson, professor of Biblical Criticism at the University of Manchester from 1936-1958, and his followers supported the interpretation of the synoptic Son of Man and regarded, that it was derived directly from Daniel 7.

[778] Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus*, 14.

[779] Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 175.

[780] Cf. Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: Harper and Row, 1967), 164-172.

[781] Cf. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 19, 22.

otherwise, the Similitudes must continue to be viewed as Jewish, and the ideas they contain, including the Son of Man concept, as reflecting the milieu of Jesus.[782]

Eduard Schweizer summarises comprehensively that the title 'Son of Man' is not definitive; rather it describes, first of all, "the earthly 'man' in his humiliation and coming suffering." Jesus as the decisive witness was transformed into the actual judge, through "re-apocalyptization" of his own eschatology "in a Jewish-apocalyptic group of the early church."[783] And this, Schweizer thinks, could be the actual origin of the apocalyptic Son of Man in general, in the Similitudes of Enoch and 2 Esdras 13.

3.3.2.3 Kasper and 'Son of Man'

In the opinion of Kasper, 'Son of Man,' unlike the 'Messiah' or 'the Christ,' is the designation that came from the mouth of Jesus, and hardly ever from others. This titel is for Kasper Semitic, having its origin in ancient Mesopotamia, denoting human being, self or humanity, which later found references also in Judaism and Christianity. He admits that the book of Daniel intensifies the entire connotation inserting a divine character/shade and pictorially introducing descriptions like 'heavenly Son of Man,' 'a representative of God's eschatological Kingdom' and 'coming in clouds' (Dan 7:13-14; 7: 21-22, 25).[784] This human figure, in clean contrast to the frightening creatures mentioned by Daniel in his earlier prophecies, symbolises for Kasper, the humanity of God's Kingdom. In analysing this title, Kasper systematically extracts three possible complexes of the 'Son of Man' sayings in the synoptic:[785]

a) The Son of Man and his activities: Jesus is completely human, sharing as others, the fate of human beings: pain, hunger, emotions, etc., but at the same time, he is also conscious that he is sent by God and lives and moves in his Spirit. Therefore, he forgives sins which only God can; heals, even to the extent of breaking the sanctity of

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[782] Cf. Philip Vielhauer, *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (München: Kaiser, 1965), 132.

[783] Eduard Schweizer, "The Son of Man Again," *New Testament Studies* IX (1963): 259-260.

[784] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 107.

[785] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 108. Kasper is clear that only when we analyse this title 'Son of God,' the full depth of Jesus' claims and the mystery of his divine person comes to light. Also see Joachim Bieneck, *Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker* (Lübbenau: Zwingli-Verl., 1951). This aspect has also been highlighted by Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 137-192, and Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, 280-333.

the Sabbath; performs signs and wonders; announces God's word in the form of parables, etc. All of this is in tune with the Son of Man, that Ezekiel actually prophesies (Ezek 2:2-4; 11: 9-11, 14-16; 13:1-7; 17:2-3; 21:1-7).

b) The Son of Man and his sufferings: The activities of Jesus are met with utter rejection and humiliation, denial and repudiation. It is in and through this miserable, contemptible, victimised and executed Son of Man that eschatological fullness of time becomes a reality. What about the coming of the Son of Man to which some of the Gospel texts like Mt 24:27, 37; Lk 18:18; 22:22; Mt 10:23 and Mk 8:38 allude? In this case, Kasper maintains that though Jesus does not identify himself with the coming of this Son of Man, one cannot consider this Son of Man-figure as greater than Jesus himself. That said, even if a personal identity of Jesus with this Son of Man is not justifiable, Kasper asserts a functional identity.

c) The Son of Man and his mediating role: The role of intervention or intermediation of the Son of Man becomes more complicated when Jesus becomes the representative of God as well as man. Everything is in him and through him, grace as well as judgement. This serves as a key-notion to understanding the post-Easter Christology, and, to be precise, a principal concept that effectively highlights the Christology of suffering and exaltation and a hope of Jesus' return, which presents him as universally significant.

Jesus' intention in his self-designation can be confirmed by his self-understanding and his messianic work. Kasper analyses this at three levels:

3.3.2.3.1 The *Abba*-Consciousness and the *Abba*-Address

Joachim Jeremias emphasised that '*abba*' is Jesus' unique form of addressing God. The word expresses „*das Herzstück des Gottesverhältnisses Jesu*," i.e., Jesus' filial consciousness. Kasper also maintains that Jesus spoke with God, like a child does with his father: confidently and securely, and at the same time with reverence and with readiness to obey. This was also true when Jesus spoke to his disciples and made recurring reference to 'your Father,' indicating that God is the Father of only those who are in the *basileia* that Jesus had inaugurated. Jeremias formulates:[786]

[786] Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, third edition (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979), 177.

Ist Gott der Vater, so sind die Jünger seine Kinder. Die Kindschaft ist das Kennzeichen der Königsherrschaft schlechthin… Kinder können ‚Abba' sagen… Die Gotteskindschaft ist also in Jesu Augen nicht Schöpfungsgabe, sondern eschatologische Heilsgabe. Nur wer zur Königsherrschaft gehört, darf Gott ‚Abba' nennen, hat schon jetzt Gott zum Vater, steht schon jetzt in der Kindschaft. Die Kindschaft der Jünger ist Anteil an Jesu Sohnschaft. Sie ist Vorweggabe der Vollendung.

This also confirms the consciousness of Jesus as the unique Son of God, and at the same time, his desire of making his followers also sons of God. Kasper is certain that Jesus as the Son gets his identity in and through his Father and by their mutual relationship. Furthermore, Kasper tries to indicate that, it is also important to note that this Father-Son relationship is not only a personal affinity but also, public or mission-oriented, mission of establishing the reign of God. This reign of God is not yet fully realised, and according to Jeremias, even Jesus' table-fellowship is an anticipation of the heavenly feast, aiming at the creation and ingathering of the eschatological people of God.[787] Further, Jesus is the Son and his task is to make others, sons of the Father. Balthasar, like Kasper, would sum up this wonderful Father-Son relationship by identifying the strong bonds of love between them and now "as Lord, Jesus shapes love, integrating the fragments of love into the wholeness of absolute love… mold all partial forms of loving, love that is somehow disordered or dispersed because of sin, to a whole form of loving, love that reflects the splendour of his own absolute love."[788]

Seyoon Kim, a South Korean Biblical Scholar, puts it: "God who gives the Kingdom to Jesus' followers is designated as 'your Father' – not accidentally! He is the one whom Jesus calls *abba* and he taught his disciples to call 'our Father.'" Here, one sees "three distinctive features of Jesus all combined: his self-designation as the 'Son of Man,' his *abba*-address to God, and his *basileia* preaching – which all have the same meaning and purpose: creation of God's eschatological people by him who is the Son of God."[789] One gets a better understanding of the saving mission of Jesus: "only his death, his return to

[787] Cf. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, 164-96.

[788] Paul E. Ritt, "Current Theolgoy: The Lordship of Jesus Christ: Balthasar and Sobrino," *TS* 49 (1988): 712.

[789] Seyoon Kim, *The Son of Man as the Son of God* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 77. Here Kim refers to Lk 12:32 where Jesus, as the Son of Man, speaks about the Kingdom of God, and tells his disciples that their Father (God) has been pleased to give them the Kingdom.

the Father, his glorification by the Father and the sending of the Spirit can release to the world the salvation and life which are the purpose of the Father's sending of the Son."[790]

The nature and the mission of Jesus, as the Son, are inseparable. From this it can be deduced that Ontological Christology and Functional Christology are neither separable nor can they be opposed to each other. Kasper brings this reflection to a conclusion, with a climax citation, "Poverty and wealth, power and helplessness, fullness and emptiness, receptiveness and completion are embodied in Jesus," [791] who is conscious that he is the obedient Son of the Father.

3.3.2.3.2 Jesus Christ: Wholly Human and the Actuality of Salvation

Kasper asserts the unanimously accepted truth that Jesus Christ was a true human being, because the corporeal existence of Jesus is undisputed in the New Testament, and in the history of the world. He affirms, "The same eternal Logos, through whom everything is, has become man in Jesus Christ."[792] Though nowhere in the Gospel is a mention made of Jesus' human mind-soul factor, it cannot be denied either, or else, the Bible cannot ascribe to Jesus' mental acts and human emotions like joy, sorrow, compassion and anger. The kernel of this truth is vouched in texts like Jn 3:18; 2 Cor 5:18, and especially Heb 1:1. In the words of Kasper, "the Risen is the Crucified and the Crucified is the Risen,"[793] and hence for Kasper, Jesus becomes the eschatological salvation of all human beings.

By the words 'The Word becoming Flesh,' Kasper means that God has completely entered humanity, frustration, and emptiness. He attempts, on the one hand, to answer the problem of Docetism[794] and on the other hand, expounds St. Paul's theology of the cross. The Son is the reflection of God's glory and his essential image. Kasper opines, "In Jesus Christ, the new has appeared and it will never grow old… Nothing greater than this is possible, even for God. Thus, with Jesus Christ, history has not come to an end in a

[790] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. II, 177.
[791] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 110.
[792] Kasper, "The Logos Character of Reality," 276.
[793] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 197. In the Crucified and Risen, Kasper identifies the eschatological salvation of every human being and in the concrete person of the risen Christ salvation is offered to humanity.
[794] The word *docetai* (illusionists) refers to early groups who denied Jesus' humanity. According to them the phenomenon of Christ, his historical and bodily existence, and thus, above all the human form were mere semblance without any true reality. This belief advocates that Jesus only seemed to be human.

temporal sense, but it has indeed attained its completion (*Voll-endung*).”[795] Kasper strongly stresses that through the Church and her ministry today, the Word of God enters completely into the flesh of the world, incarnates in the concrete world situation to the very core of human reality.[796]

For all who deny the Incarnation, an anathema is pronounced, and in the words of John, those who do not acknowledge Christ and his Incarnation, have the spirit of Antichrist (1 Jn 4:2f; 4:15; 5:5, 2 Jn 7). Kasper feels that this issue needs to be handled not only between Christians and non-Christians, but also “between Christianity and anti-Christianity.”[797] The question of Incarnation has been well dealt by the Council of Lyons (1274) and also by the Council of Florence (1441) where the latter, on the one hand, attacks the Manichees who admitted only an apparent body, and on the other hand, the Valentines, who wanted to admit a heavenly body. Ignatius of Antioch therefore, adamantly describes Christ as a “‘flesh-bearer’ (*sarkophoros*).”[798]

Kasper further opines that, the question of the full humanity of Jesus revolves around the voluntariness of his obedience to be one among humanity, and hence, is also decisive for the human character of salvation. It is concerned with the fact that God, does not act by passing over or going beyond man, but always through man, and by means of his freedom. Jesus’ life, and especially the Last Supper therefore, discloses in recapitulation not only Jesus’ mission but also his innermost being: He is a being from God, and for God, and thereby simultaneously, a being for mankind. In Kasper’s formulation – “He (Jesus) is *eucharistia* and *eulogia*, gratitude and blessing, in person.”[799] Kasper further believes that Jesus is not one of the means of salvation that God offers humanity, but in and through the Holy Spirit, “the personal mediator of salvation.”[800]

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[795] Walter Kasper, “Jesus Christ: God’s Final Word,” *Communio* 28 (Spring, 2001): 62.

[796] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 198.

[797] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 200. Cf. also Francis Ferrier, *Das Geheimnis der Menschwerdung* (Aschaffenburg: Pattloch, 1963); Jacob Neusner, *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in formative Judaism* (Binghamton, NY: Global Publication, 2001); Robert Lawrence Ottley, *The Doctine of the Incarnation*, Vol. II (Charleston, US: BiblioBazaar, 2009); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Scandal of the Incarnation: Irenaeus against the Heresies*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).

[798] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 201.

[799] Kasper, “The Unity and Multiplicity of Aspects in the Eucharist,” 120.

[800] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 209.

Kasper maintains that in Jesus Christ God is revealed to man and further, Jesus also becomes a description of who man is for God. It is in Jesus Christ that the definitive nature of God and man become apparent to the world. Kasper identifies four basic features of human existence, as determined by Jesus Christ:[801]

a) Human existence is existence in receptivity, existence owed and therefore existence in thanksgiving, received only as a gift. Grace and salvation therefore are gifts of human existence.
b) Human freedom is liberated freedom where one is set free and not dominated by finite values and finite goods. Only the bond with the infinite and absolute freedom of God makes one really free for engagement in the world.
c) Human freedom is perfected in obedience. Christian freedom consists not in control, but in being available, and availability means unreserved openness and constant readiness.
d) Faith is the quintessence of man's salvation. In faith, man finds foothold and ground, meaning and goal, content and fulfilment, and thus, is redeemed from the instability, aimlessness, meaninglessness and emptiness of his existence.

Sin and salvation are seen as part and parcel of human life. A human person is never seen as an isolated figure, but as one who is involved in the society because of his common origin and destiny. In early times, a sinner was regarded as a dangerous threat and a burden. The community therefore, disassociated itself from him and excommunication resulted, and as a result reconciliation was only possible through atonement.[802] Acknowledgement of sin, inward conversion and charitable activities were opportunities for reconciliation, which Jesus preached.

Jesus lived and died for humanity and for the world since he was a man for others. Kasper makes use of two important words - *huper hemon* (for us) and *huper pollon* (for many). This Greek word *Huper* has a triple meaning: for our sake, for our good or for our benefit,

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[801] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 213-215. Kasper attempts to show that salvation came in Jesus Christ, in and through Jesus' obedience, who became completely vacant and empty, receptacle for God's living presence. Jesus' obedience, his availability for God and for others, is the actual way in which salvation exists in history.

[802] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 215. Leviticus 16:20f explains the ritual of atonement where goats become scapegoats as they carry the sin of all the people. Cf also Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferung Israels*, Vol. I (München: Kaiser, 1992), 263f; Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Vol. I, sixth edition (Stuttgart: Klotz, 1959), 55f.

and, in our place. It speaks about Jesus' solidarity with humanity as the very centre of his human existence.[803] *Huper* formulas are found in 1 Cor 15:3-5; Lk 22:19; Mk 14:24; Mk 10:45, etc., these texts make the meaning of this term clear and the letter to the Hebrews explains at length, the solidarity of the Son (cf. 2:17f; 2:14; 4:15; 12:2 etc).

In the words of Schoonenberg, "Jesus Christ is the eschatological culmination of God's salvific operations and thus of our history and salvation."[804] Jesus' unique but universal position in history, according to Kasper, is founded in Jesus' representation as the decisive centre of his existence. He has a universal significance, is one and unique. Kasper maintains that it was through Jesus that something happened once and for all: "the reconciliation of the world."[805]

Kasper has tried to explain how Jesus as the Son is also God's emissary. Jesus is the one who not only reveals who God is, but also mediates God's salvation for the world. Kasper has also pointed out the inner sacrificial dimension of the saving act of Jesus.

3.3.2.3.3 Purpose of Incarnation: Liberation and Glorification

Throughout Jesus' saving activities, there continues a permanent mutual glorification of Father and Son. During the earthly mission of the divine messenger, not only does Jesus glorify his Father, but conversely, even God glorifies the Son whom he has sent (cf. Jn 8:54; 12:28). Similarly, the Golgotha-event, which is the "climax of Jesus' saving activity, is a glorification of the Father by Jesus and vice versa."[806] God, explains Kasper, is:

> Self-giving and self-emptying love between Father, Son and Spirit, for all eternity, he can wholly give himself in Jesus Christ without thereby diminishing or losing himself. The divinity of Jesus Christ is manifest in his emptying of himself (Phil 2:6)… If God has wholly, definitively,and unreservedly poured himself out into the concrete person and history of Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ is "*id quo maius cogitari nequit*," that than

[803] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 216.

[804] Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 98.

[805] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 217. God's act of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ results in God's new creative love for humanity and Kasper calls this act as God's solidarity for the world.

[806] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. II, 403.

> which nothing greater can be thought (Anselm of Canterbury); for he is at the same time "*id quo Deus maius operari nequit*," that than which God can do nothing greater… Everything true or good that other religions possess is a participation in what Jesus Christ reveals to us in fullness.[807]

Kasper refers back to the words and gestures at Jesus' last meal which, for him, is the summary of Jesus' entire life and mission[808] (God's glorification), and simultaneously, the anticipatory meaning of his death (man's salvation). Ratzinger would say that without Jesus' life and his sacrificial death, only his gestures at the last meal would be, so to say, currency that lacked securities.[809]

St. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as the new Adam (Rom 5:12-21). Kasper, describing the role of the New Adam, maintains that, the Son of God changes the situation of everyone by entering into the world. Becoming everything to everyone, Jesus Christ is now a "part of man's ontological definition." Since God comes through Christ into the world and makes it possible for each person to enter into an intimate and personal relationship with himself, "new opportunity of salvation, is opened to the whole world and to all men" [810] in the body of Jesus Christ. Hence, for Kasper, "Jesus Christ is the key, the centre, and the goal of human history."[811] Human beings, who are caught up in a disastrous situation, through Jesus Christ now experience a new situation, an experience of redemption also understood as liberation, as well as a state of release from all sinfulness and captivity.

While speaking of redemption, Kasper also makes use of the word *pidin* – which simply means the payment of a ransom. In the case of Jesus, *pidin* seems to be appropriate, to bring out the meaning of redemption as a pure act of grace. Texts like Mk 10:45 and Mt 20:28 which say that "the Son of Man came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" actually seem to be unintelligible statements. They however, become clear during the death of Jesus and Kasper holds to the theology that Jesus Christ is the redemption in person because according to Kasper "redemption cannot be separated from his person and

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[807] Kasper, "Jesus Christ: God's Final Word," 69.

[808] Kasper, "The Unity and Multiplicity of Aspects in the Eucharist," 118-119.

[809] Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Eucharistie, Mitte der Kirche: Vier Predigten* (Munich: E. Wewel, 1978), 10, 18.

[810] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 205.

[811] Kasper, "The Logos Character of Reality," 276.

his fate." [812] Hence, Christ has been made our redemption by God (1 Cor 1:30). It is the liberation or freedom brought by Christ, and freedom is Jesus Christ himself.

Kasper understands redemption as basically a transformation, a new situation created by Christ, which alone brings freedom.[813] It is not to be understood as something miraculous that has been achieved by Christ, or something that is imposed on humanity without personal decision for it, and without faith. Further Kasper opines,

> Objective redemption consequently may not to be understood as a kind of a container or treasury of grace, from which individuals are assigned their subjective grace… As original sin is conveyed through the old humanity, so redemption is conveyed through the new humanity, through those who believe in Jesus Christ and who as believers are touched by him, through the Church, which is represented symbolically by Mary under the cross (cf. Jn 19:15-27).[814]

The declaration of the centurion and the guards (Mt 27:54) that Jesus indeed is the Son of God probably "foreshadows the inclusion of the gentiles in the covenant people."[815] Jesus on the cross demonstrates to the whole world his perfect obedience to the Father, and so evidences for his divine Sonship.[816] The reality of redemption through Jesus Christ, according to Kasper, has a social dimension since this redemption is conveyed and made present through concrete encounters, conversations, and living communions with human beings who are touched by Jesus Christ. "Salvation means the salvation of the one and entire human being," where one is liberated from the bonds of his former existence to a new freedom, "not *from* the body and *from* the world, but *in* the body and *in* the world." [817] Finally, Kasper asserts that, through Jesus Christ man experiences new freedom. Redemption is a way not leading one back simply to his restoration in his original state, but leading forward to a new promised human existence. Therefore Kasper notes that,

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[812] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 206. Kasper also warns the problem and danger of objective redemption and therefore argues that salvation and redemption cannot be imposed without personal decision and willingness to appropriate it.

[813] Discussing further on freedom, Kasper also mentions a few thinkers like Karl Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus who strongly believed that the very acknowledgement of God makes human freedom impossible.

[814] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 206-207.

[815] Cf. William David Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, Vol. III, Commentary on Matthew XIX-XXVIII (Edinburg: Clark, 1997), 636.

[816] Cf. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005) 570.

[817] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 207.

"the perfection of the individual and that of all mankind cannot be complete until the cosmos, too, is included in that completion."[818]

Furthermore, Jesus was a man who lived for others, who came to serve and to give his life. He emptied himself up to death was raised up and established as the Lord of the universe (Phil 2:6-11). Kasper therefore asserts that "the new cosmic law is self-giving and self-sacrificing service."[819] He clearly maintains that absolute solidarity among men is possible only in God, only as realisation of, and participation in, God's unconditional love for every human being. It is:

> Only when God becomes man and as such is absolutely the man for the others, is the ground prepared for the opportunity of a new existence and a new solidarity among men, and for peace and reconciliation in the world. Mediation among men is possible only through the one mediation between God and men (cf. 1 Tim 2.5)… Only when the love of God for man becomes an event in history, can a new beginning be made in history. Only through the historical solidarity of God in the God-man, Jesus Christ, can solidarity be established among men… Christian faith is always thrown back on Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man, and therefore of men, and of one another.[820]

In the above deliberations, Kasper has tried to analyse the meaning of Jesus' title 'Son of Man,' from various angles. He has meaningfully highlighted the purpose and role of Jesus as the Son of Man – human redemption and human liberation. The liberation that Jesus brings is a 'ransom through sacrifice' (Rom 3:25) and Kasper considers this sacrifice of Jesus as a crucial element. Finally, Kasper believes that a person is fully redeemed when one learns to live in accordance with the will of God.

Concluding Remarks

One of the important aspects to be noted is that, christological titles of sovereignty and the whole Christology that followed the Easter-event, according to Kasper, must be understood as the response made by the Christian community to Jesus' claim and his call

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[818] Kasper, "Hope in the Final Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory," 378.

[819] Kasper, "Jesus Christ: God's Final Word," 70.

[820] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 223, 225. Cf. also Yves Congar, *Jesus Christus – unser Mittler unser Herr* (Stuttgart: Schwabenverl., 1967); William Brownsberger, *Jesus the Mediator* (USA: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

to believers to come to a decision. These titles do not falsify Jesus' message in any way.[821] Kasper puts it succinctly and rightly, that though Jesus has many names in the New Testament, not a single title is adequate to describe his entire person, since all the titles ascribed to him fall short in depicting his multifarious personality and his mission. Kasper has dealt a great deal on two titles that he considers significantly important, namely, 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man,' because the entire life and mission of Jesus is nothing but the Gospel concerning God's own Son.

Kasper has attempted to prove how Jesus is divine, but at the same time a real human being, and brings out convincingly the uniqueness of Jesus' humanity. Though Jesus is one in being with the Father, he is also truly and wholly human, and one true mediator between God and man. Whatever may be the titles one might give to Jesus, Kasper rightly asserts, that Jesus claims to speak and act in place of God and to have a unique communion with his Father. Hence, Kasper affirms that Christian faith stands and falls with the confession of Jesus as the Son of God, which is a unique claim in the history of religion.[822]

Analysing the titles of Jesus 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man,' Kasper has tried to show how the former affirms the divinity of Jesus and the later, his humanity. He has also tried to prove that there exists an intimate relationship between these two, and hence, they being counterparts, cannot be separated. All that has been discussed so far concerning the titles of Jesus – 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man' can be concisely summed up in the words of Kasper: Jesus Christ, God-man is not a "piecing-to-gether-in-afterthought of a divine and human nature… In his ultimate selflessness and in his surrender to the Father and to mankind, Jesus Christ is wholly God and wholly man."[823]

Ecclesia in Asia, analysing the passion and the death of Jesus, clearly says that through Jesus' death, life has come again in the world and salvation was sealed once and for all. Jesus, therefore, "is our Saviour in the fullest sense of the word because his words and works, especially his resurrection from the dead, have revealed him to be the Son of God, the pre-existent Word, who reigns for ever as Lord and Messiah" (EA 11). The Church

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[821] Kasper, *Introduction to Christian Faith*, 50-51.

[822] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 163.

[823] Kasper, "The Unity and Multiplicity of Aspects in the Eucharist," 137.

today has to fulfil a major task: Answer crucial questions concering the identity of Jesus Christ today. She has to do this by proving that Jesus Christ is the perfect man, the measure of true humanism and therefore ‘whoever follows Christ the perfect man becomes himself more a man’ (GS 41).

CHAPTER 4
UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST AND UNIVERSAL MEDIATION
PART I: CHURCH AND HER TEACHINGS

Introduction

Among the religions of the world, Christianity is indeed unique because it has its birth and origin in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He is the one who has radically altered history, giving new orientation and meaning to human life and values. Jesus Christ is at the heart of Christianity and he is accepted by Christians as their personal saviour. He is considered unique not only because of his mysterious incarnation but also because of his voluntary act of self-giving on the Cross to redeem humanity from sin and death.

The question of the uniqueness and universality of salvation in Jesus Christ has a long history in ecclesiastical circles and in different religious traditions. In recent years, in light of the new theological and social conditions like globalisation, atheism, scepticism and pluralism, this subject of debate has taken a more complicated form. The uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, when considered in the Asian context, and particularly in India, which is a cradle of world religions, is a contentious issue, especially today.

In this chapter, different aspects of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ will be discussed in detail keeping in mind the Indian socio-cultural setting. Two well-known Indian theologians, namely, Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred, have been chosen to facilitate a healthy discussion and to highlight some concrete elements concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. These Indian scholars will be brought into discussion with Walter Kasper (in the final chapter) so as to highlight the similarities and dissimilarities in their theologising. This interaction between Asian and Western lines of thought is intended to help in reinterpreting the terms ‘unique’ and ‘universal’ mediation of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity in a meaningful way. Harmoniously blending these two lines of thought could impart certain clarity and comprehensibility to the discussion.

This chapter is subdivided into two segments. In the first, essential guidelines concerning the unique mediation and universal salvation of Jesus Christ, delineated by the Church Magisterium will be synthesised. In the second part a brief description of the arrival and existence of Christianity in India amid several other world religions will be given, and the contributions of Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred in relation to theologising in India will be highlighted.

4.1. Magisterial Teachings of the Church

In this section, some important documents of Second Vatican Council are considered, outlining the foundational teachings of the Church and her stand as regards Christianity and its relationship with other religions.[824] Catholic Church teachings regarding the uniqueness and universal salvation in Jesus Christ will also be elucidated. Previous ecumenical Councils and documents referring to these issues have been mentioned already in the preceding chapters.

4.1.1 Certain Reflections before the Second Vatican Council

Before taking up the stance of the Second Vatican Council, it is necessary to cite certain significant and crucial teachings that the Church clearly asserted prior to this great ecumenical council, some of which have apparently created misconceptions within the Church. Before the dawn of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (1943) discussed at length the membership of the Church. In no. 22 of this encyclical he declares solemnly:[825]

> Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptised and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed… And therefore, if a man refuses to hear the Church, let him be considered –

[824] For more of Vatican II see Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012); Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006); John W. O' Malley, *What happened at Vatican II* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Hardward University Press, 2008); Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, ed., *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012).

[825] For more explanation refer also Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, nos. 847-853, especially 849.

> so the Lord commands – as a heathen and a publican (Mt 18:17). It follows that those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a Body, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit.

Pope Pius XII added two interesting remarks in this encyclical. He exhorted the faithful to pray for all those who are 'not yet enlightened by the truth of the Gospel' and 'are still outside the fold of the Church' and, also for those who 'on account of regrettable schism, are separated from us, and who, though unworthy, represent the person of Jesus Christ on earth.' Secondly, he addressed this heartfelt desire to all 'outside the Catholic Church,' whether other Christians or non-Christians: "from a heart overflowing with love We ask each and every one of them to correspond to the interior movements of grace, and to seek to withdraw from that state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation." He explained further that "even though by an unconscious desire and longing they have a certain relationship with the Mystical Body of the Redeemer, they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church."[826] In a certain sense this teaching of the Pope gave some definite authority to what Robert Bellarmine had proposed centuries earlier: those people who do not actually belong to the Church can be saved by their desire (*votum*) of belonging to it.[827] Pope Pius XII also confirmed the view of Francisco Suarez: that even an implicit desire would be enough.[828]

By the end of the 1940s, a group in the archdiocese of Boston led by a US Jesuit priest, Leonard Feeney, insisted that it was only through actual membership of the Catholic Church that anyone could be saved. This group consisted of members who faithfully adhered to the axiom: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[829] The Second Vatican Council did not

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[826] Cf. *Mystici Corporis*, nos. 102, 103. *Mystici Corporis Christi* is a papal encyclical issued by Pope Pius XII on June 29, 1943, which deals on the Church, the mystical body of Christ.

[827] Sebastian Tromp, who drafted *Mystici Corporis* for Pius XII, was an expert on the teachings of Bellarmine and edited eleven volumes of his work. For more details see, "Bellarmine, St Robert," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, third edition, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182-183.

[828] More on this encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, see Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 126-129; Karl Rahner, "Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. II, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963), 1-88; Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1992), 131-135; Jan-Heiner Tück, „Extra ecclesiam nulla salus: Das Modell der gestuften Kirchenzugehörigkeit und seine dialogischen Potentiale," in *Erinnerung an die Zukunft: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, ed. Jan-Heiner Tück (Freiburg: Herder, 2012), 255-256.

[829] Feeney articulated and defended this strict interpretation of the Roman Catholic doctrine, arguing that baptism of blood and baptism of desire are unavailing and hence no non-Catholic would be saved. As he

encourage the use of his axiom. Instead it addressed the previously held widespread erroneous opinion that non-Christian religions contain only error and superstitions, thus venturing a positive approach to other world religions.

4.1.2. The Second Vatican Council and Other Religions

A prior consideration of some of the Second Vatican Council documents which impart the fundamental teachings of the Church's relationship with other religions and Christ's salvific action in them is necessary before discussing important documents such as *Nostra Aetate* and *Ad Gentes*. Hence, what follows now is a brief summary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* concerning the status of 'the religious others.'

All these documents of the Second Vatican Council declare that Christ is the Saviour of all peoples and the light of humanity, the revealer for all peoples, and the head of the entire human race. Christ's divine presence and grace embrace everyone and move everyone towards unity (SC 83; LG 1, 16, 17). All people are 'called,' albeit diversely, to the Church which, in order to procure the glory of God and the salvation of all humanity, preaches the Gospel to every person (LG 11, 13, 16). The Church prays for the entire world (SC 53; LG 17) and all are invited to this catholic unity which prefigures and promotes universal peace. Chapter II of *Lumen Gentium* titled "The People of God" (nos. 14 -16) gives an overall view of the structure of this catholic unity. Kasper asserts, that the Catholic Church is one and the only true Church – *una et unica*.[830]

The Catholic faithful belong to the inner core of this unity. Based on the sacred Scripture and the sacred Tradition, they acknowledge that Christ is the mediator and the way of

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repeatedly refused summons to Rome, he fell from favour from the Catholic Church and came under ecclesiastical censure and was finally excommunicated on February 13, 1953 by the Holy See for persistent disobedience to legitimate Church authority. Cf. also Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission*, 114-115. For the latest detailed study of this theme refer to the entire article of Jan-Heiner Tück „Extra ecclesiam nulla salus: Das Modell der gestuften Kirchenzugehörigkeit und seine dialogischen Potentiale," 242-267. In his article Professor Tück has explained the history of the origin of this axiom, its biblical and theological aspects and finally basing on these interpretations, has explained specially articles 14, 15, and 16 of *Lumen Gentium*. For the long and complex development of this axiom, read also Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* Francis Sullivan has made detailed study of the historical development of this theme. Read also Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 31-40.

[830] Walter Kasper, „Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil," *Cath* 4 (1979): 268-271.

salvation, and that the Church is necessary for salvation.[831] "Fully incorporated into the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization" (LG 14). People are visibly bonded to the Church through "profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion" and through acceptance of the Pope as the Supreme Pontiff, who leads and guides the Church. However, bodily membership in the Church is not sufficient to guarantee salvation.[832] The maintenance of fellowship coincides with recognition of the government, which means fellowship with the whole community, since the fellowship of the whole Church is manifested in the *communio* of the bishops under the Pope.[833] The Church embraces even Catechumens, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, intend to be incorporated into the Church. Such an implicit desire for baptism of water is popularly termed 'baptism of desire.' Though baptism of desire is not a sacrament, it does confer sanctifying grace. *Conjunctio* is the term used to designate the relationship of Catechumens with the Church. Further, it is not mere human volition but the Holy Spirit moving the Catechumens to faith that saves.[834]

Lumen Gentium 15 provides a theological assessment of the historical reality of the separated Christians and their communities in light of the previous article.[835] In this second circle are the baptised who are honoured by the name of Christian, but, however,

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[831] Aloys Grillmeier, "The People of God," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol I, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Lalit Adolphus (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 175-177. For more on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, cf. Walter Kasper, „Das Verhältnis von Schrift und Tradition: Eine pneumatologische Perspektive," in *Verbindliches Zeugnis*, 1: *Kanon-Schrift-Tradition*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg und Theodor Schneider (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1992), 335-370.

[832] Here the Council makes it categorically clear that even after incorporation into the Church, if one does not persevere in charity is not saved. The Council considers them as remaining indeed in the bosom of the Church but only 'in body' and not 'in heart.' Those who fail to respond to the grace of Christ in thoughts, words and deed are considered not to be saved and also to be severely judged.

[833] Kasper, „Kirche als *Communio*," 65-82. Here Kasper deals with the question of *communio* and understands it basically as communion with God. He further explains how Jesus is the *communio* between God and humanity. *Koinonia*/*Communio* also means for Kasper *participatio* in the life of God through Word and Sacrament. See also Wolfgang Beinert, *Um das dritte Kirchenattribut* II: *Katholizität in der römisch-katholischen Theologie* (Essen: Ludgerus Verlag 1964), 369-379.

[834] Grillmeier, "The People of God," 177. Being incorporated in the Church is not to be considered as something static, but rather it is a constant gradual growth, inspired by love which leads one to be fruitful. This *caritas* was considered very essential without which, just belonging to the Church by professing the faith, receiving the sacraments and acknowledging the papal authority were considered only external signs, unavailing for salvation.

[835] Walter Kasper, „Der ekklesiologische Charakter der nichtkatholischen Kirchen," *ThQ* 145 (1965): 42-62. See also G. Steck, „*Lumen Gentium*? Zum Verständnis der ‚Constitutio dogmatica de ecclesia'," *Materialdienst des konfessionskundlichen Instituts* 16 (1965): 85-90; G. Baum, "The Ecclesial Reality of the Other Churches," *CONC* 4 (1965): 34-46; H. Mühlen, „Der eine Geist Christi und die vielen Kirchen nach den Aussagen des Vatikanum II," *Theologie und Glaube* 55 (1965): 329-366.

do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety (are not in full communion with the Church). There are also those who do not acknowledge the Pope as the leader and shepherd of the entire Church, thus failing to preserve unity or communion under the successor of Peter. The Council confirms that even though these lack the unity which depends on communion with Christ's Vicar, they are "united with Christ" through baptism, thus retaining the indelible character imparted by baptism. In the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, it is a "participation in Christ's priesthood, flowing from Christ himself."[836] The Council describes these as belonging to "Churches or ecclesiastical communities" (LG 15). To the extent that they are authentic elements of sanctification outside the visible structure of the Catholic Church, they will be directed to Catholic unity. It should be also noted "that the term 'ecclesial communities' does not describe a merely sociological grouping; it reflects the presence of 'elements' of the Church in non-Roman Christianity."[837]

Kasper opines that the relationship between the Catholic Church and other churches and communities is determined by the certainty that they all preserve genuine, visible and significant elements of the sign instituted by Christ. The significance of these elements for salvation is also recognised, namely, the reality of Christ and the Spirit in these churches.[838] Grillmeier states that wherever a common heritage (*commune patrimonium*) exists between the Catholic Church and other churches, it must lead all in the restoration of unity of Christianity. Though this common unity is a long process of growth, he mentions two important means through which it could be achieved - "On the part of the separated Churches and communities there must be an effort to search for and accept the full will of Christ in founding his Church. On the part of Catholic Church, there must be an effort to represent and realise in its full purity and attractiveness the institution of Christ, as it understands itself to be."[839]

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[836] Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol*., III, 63, 3.

[837] E. Schlink, „Das Ergebnis des konziliaren Ringens um den Ökumenismus der römisch-katholischen Kirchen," *ThQ* 145 (1965): 183f.

[838] Kasper, „Der ekklesiologische Charakter der nichtkatholischen Kirchen," 55f. See also P. Bläser, „Die Kirche und die Kirchen," *Cath* 18 (1964): 89-107; W. Rüdel, „Zur Unterscheidung von ‚Kirche' und ‚Sekte'," *Cath* 19 (1965): 161-168.

[839] Grillmeier, "The People of God," 181-182. Refer also *Lumen Gentium* 8 where this article compares the Church to the mystery of in the incarnate Word, the sole Church of Christ as professed in the Creed. This Church constituted and organised as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church. Finally as Jesus Christ carried out the work of salvation in poverty and oppression, so the Church of Christ is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men.

The outermost circle consists of all "those who have not yet received the Gospel" but yet "are related to the People of God in various ways" (LG 16). This circle includes non-Christians who are seen in four groups: "Jews, Muslims, people who are ignorant of the God of Jewish-Christian revelation but still believe in a God of providence and judgement, and then atheists, or rather, those who profess themselves without religion but in reality seek and affirm absolute justice and peace, that is, absolute values."[840] Since God's 'plan of salvation' is implemented solely through the Church, the ability in the non-Christians to recognise the one God is a gift of the Holy Spirit, administered through the Church. One should not be surprised to see this salvific activity beyond the visible structure of the Church, given the Saviour's desire for all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). The Council assures that even those can attain salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or of his Church, but sincerely seek God, and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do his will, as dictated by their conscience. Hence, whatever good or truth is found among them (outside the Church) is looked upon by the Church as preparation for the Gospel (*praeparatio Evangelii;* Εὐαγγελικὴ προπαρασκευή).[841]

The modern Church has not abandoned her mission of preaching the Gospel to all nations, "for the Church is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part that God's plan may be fully realised" (LG 17). This is a great task of the Church: bringing the Gospel to those in 'slavery of error' and at the same time purifying and perfecting whatever good lies latent in the religious practises and cultures of diverse peoples. Kasper believes that historical-dynamic understanding of the unity and the Catholicity, meaningfully expressed in *Lumen Gentium*, has opened new possibilities of understanding and relationship with non-Catholic Christians.[842]

Gaudium et Spes in particular article 22, also makes reference to Christ, the Holy Spirit and especially people of other faiths. It states that "Christ fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling" and that "all the truths mentioned so far should find in him their source and their most perfect embodiment." Christ is revealed as the true

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[840] Grillmeier, "The People of God," 182. *Lumen Gentium*, mentioning various groups especially of non-Christians, tries in these three numbers to extend the boundaries of belongingness to the widest distance possible, thereby, trying to include every human being as people of God – *populus Dei*.

[841] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 117.

[842] Kasper, „Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil," 273.

answer to the questions of human beings, their spiritual longings and aspirations. He is the true image of God and transforms the human person once again into the likeness of God. Joseph Ratzinger, in one of his commentories to the documents of Vatican II, identifies a new type of completely Christocentric theology. He states, "On the basis of Christ this dares to present theology as anthropology and only becomes radically theological by including man in discourse about God by way of Christ, thus manifesting the deepest unity of theology."[843] The article further enumerates three fundamental mysteries of Christology: the Incarnation (*assumption hominis*), the Cross and the Resurrection.

A genuine search for God and the endeavour to live a life expressed in conscientious action are named as the central factors of salvation outside the Church. Kasper reiterates that the uniting factor between Christians and non-Christians is "not the possession of the truth, but the search for the truth."[844] Ratzinger believes that *Gaudium et Spes* 22 highlights the significant elements of *Lumen Gentium*. God's activity, in *Lumen Gentium*, is somehow seen to be reduced to the '*influxus gratiae*,' and human person appears as the active subject of the saving process. However, it is clearly emphasised that salvation is God's business and hence "cannot be defined by us. Human person no longer appears as the agent of the process with his "*quaerere, adimplere, conari, posse*" and "niti.""[845]

In summary, these documents of the Second Vatican Council acknowledge that the Church recognises elements of 'grace and truth' (in other words what is 'good and truth') in the 'religious others' and considers it to be a preparation for the Gospel, given by him who enlightens all men, that they may at length have life (LG 16). It also recognises the role of the Holy Spirit which drives the Church in her mission of the full realisation of the plan of God in the world (LG 17). It is duly admitted, that Second Vatican Council is the

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[843] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Church and Man's Calling: The Dignity of the Human Person," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. V, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 159. Cf. also Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Merifica* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 3-90.

[844] Walter Kasper, "The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*," in *The Institute Series, 2. Reasons for Living and Hoping: Gaudium et Spes 40 Years On*, Walter Kasper and James Hanvey (London: Heythrop College, 2006), 21.

[845] Ratzinger, "The Church and Man's Calling," 162. The meanings of the words used here denote: *quaerere* (seeking), *adimplere* (satisfaction), *conari* (trying) *posse* (ability) and *niti* (wisdom personified/morality).

first Council to speak expressly of Muslims and value positively their faith, worship, and hope in God our Creator (LG 16).

Having highlighted the essential elements in these three documents of the Second Vatican Council namely, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, it is now appropriate to look into the Magisterial Teachings of the Church concerning her relationship with other world religions and the person of Jesus Christ, as expounded in other two important documents of the Second Vatican Council, namely, *Nostra Aetate* and *Ad Gentes*.

4.1.2.1 *Nostra Aetate*

In the sphere of inter-religious dialogue, *Nostra Aetate*, declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions issued (1965), based on some of the important ideas in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium*, has proved to be a genuine milestone.[846] It was hoped that "this declaration would help in contributing greater understanding among people and foster fellowship among nations."[847] It emphatically states that the Church does not deny or reject anything of "what is true and holy in these religions" (NA 2). On the contrary, the Church respects those precepts and doctrines they profess, although different from what she herself believes and proposes, acknowledging that these "reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men" (NA 2). The declaration clearly affirms that Christ, who is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6) remains the real way of salvation.

At the very outset, the declaration named three basic elements common to humanity and nations: their origin in God, the divine providence and saving designs that extends to all people, and their common heavenly destiny (NA 1). This declaration further reflected on other religions, in particular, on Hinduism and Buddhism (both of which existed centuries

[846] Cf. Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (Ohio: Franciscan Media, 2007), 156-163.

[847] Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 129.

before the coming of Christ himself), religions which also tried to provide answers to "the riddles of human condition."[848]

In Hindu philosophy and religious tradition, "men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myths and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practises, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love" (NA 2). What does the Council intend to say when it mentions 'recourse to God in confidence and love?'[849] The declaration further states that "Buddhism in its various forms… proposes a way of life by which man can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help" (NA 2).

Nostra Aetate however, refrains from offerig a definitive answer regarding the question: is Buddhism purely a philosophy or is it a religion, but without God? It clearly acknowledges the religious character of Buddhism,[850] mentioning nothing negative about such understanding. Siebenrock rightly remarks that this declaration was never intended to be a complete treatment; however, it achieved the purpose of the document – to lay the ground for dialogue and collaboration – without having recourse to lengthy analysis.[851]

Acknowledging what is 'true and holy' in other religions, *Nostra Aetate* encourages dialogue and collaboration with them.[852] Catholics are exhorted to act with prudence and charity, to witness Christian faith and life, and to take up dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, preserving and encouraging the spiritual and moral truths

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[848] Gerald O' Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 85.

[849] For more on Hinduism in *Nostra Aetate*, see Cyril B. Papali, "Excursus on Hinduism," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. III, ed. Vorgrimler, trans. Glen-Doepel, 137-144.

[850] For more on Buddhism in *Nostra Aetate*, see Heinrich Dumoulin, "Excursus on Buddhism," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. III, ed. Vorgrimler, 145-150.

[851] Roman A. Siebenrock, „Theologischer Kommentar zur Erklärung über die Haltung der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen *Nostra Aetate*," in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, III, ed. Peter Hünermann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 655. Read also Gerald O' Collins, "Implementing *Nostra Aetate*," *Gregorianum* 87 (2006): 714-726.

[852] Pope Paul VI's 1964 encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, has firmly encouraged such dialogue.

among non-Christians. It is clear that this declaration neither denied nor opposed the fundamental differences inherent in other religions.[853]

One crucial question still remains unanswered: What, or rather who, has given rise to that which is considered 'true and holy' in the other religions of the world? In general, all religions promote gospel values like love, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, patience and tolerance. If Christ is 'the truth' for humanity, he is also 'the life' for them. O'Collins rightly poses the question: How can Jesus "'illuminate' all human beings, without conveying to them, through a personal, divine disclosure, something of God's self-revelation and hence also the offer of salvation?"[854]

4.1.2.2 *Ad Gentes*

Sharp, differing views of Christian missionary activity caused several difficulties in the drafting, discussion, and revision of the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes divinitus*), which was finally issued in 1965.[855] At the very outset, the Decree declares that the missionary activity of the Church originates in the plan of God the Father, whose 'love' and 'goodness' give rise to the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit. Through those missions, God who 'in his great and merciful kindness has freely created us, graciously calls us to share in his life and glory' (AG 2).[856] Suso Brechter has clearly identified "the inner Trinitarian processions in the primordial fount of love (*fontalis amora*)," which according to him "come forth *ad extra* in Christ's incarnation and in the mission of the Holy Spirit."[857] The goal of mission is that the whole

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[853] Cf. Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, 129-131.

[854] O' Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 100.

[855] See Norman Tanner, "The Church in the World (*Ecclesia ad Extra*)," in *History of Vatican II*, Vol. IV, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), 269-386, specially see 331-345; Peter Hünermann, „Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missiostätigkeit der Kirche: *Ad Gentes*," in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanishcen Konzil*, Band IV, ed. Peter Hünermann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), 219-336; O' Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 109-127; Stephen B. Bevans, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*," in *Evangelization and Religious Freedom*, Stephen B. Bevans and Jeffrey Gros (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 3-142.

[856] For more on the grounding of the Church's mission in the mystery of the Trinity, see James B. Anderson, *A Vatican II Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery: The Historical-doctrinal Genesis of* '*Ad Gentes*' 1, 2-5 (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1988); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine to Today's Mission* (London: Edinburgh Press, 1963).

[857] Suso Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity: Doctrinal Principles," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. IV, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Hilda Graef (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 114.

human race 'form one people of God (the Father), comes together into the one body of Christ, and is built up into the temple of the Holy Spirit,' thus having its foundation in the life of the Trinity. For 'all who share human nature, regenerated in Christ through the Holy Spirit,' will be able to 'gaze together on the glory of God' (AG 7) and call him "Our Father."[858]

Yves Congar rightly acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit as the life-giving 'soul' in the work of salvation. According to him, it is the Spirit of Christ that drives the Church to expand through her missionary activity. Equipped with hierarchical and charismatic gifts, the saving work in the Church progresses and nations are thus led to the unity of faith, both in the community and in the Church.[859] He clearly maintains that, the Holy Spirit was constantly at work for the salvation of the world, even before Christ's return to the Father, and that he not only merely accompanies but also prepares the way for missionary activity.[860]

At this point it is essential to consider and interpret the meaning of the phrase 'seeds of the Word' used by this Decree, hidden in the 'national and religious traditions' of various peoples which needs to be uncovered with 'gladness and respect.' These 'seeds of the Word' are 'riches which the bountiful God has distributed to the nations.' It is the task of the disciples of Christ, to "try to illuminate these riches with the light of the Gospel, to set them free and to bring them back to the dominion of God the Saviour" (AG 11). This Decree envisages what God has already done in the "religious traditions" of different nations, especially by "sowing" in them the seeds of the Word and by "distributing" to them "the riches" of divine grace.[861] In other words, Article 11 names not only witness

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[858] Cf. Jn 7:18; 8:30, 44; 8:50; 17:1.

[859] See Rose M. Beal, ed., *Mystery of the Church, People of God: Yves Congar's Total Ecclesiology as a Path to Vatican II* (USA: The Catholic University of America, 2014); also Brian Gleeson, "The Church as the People of God: A People in Communion," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 5 (August 2005): 1-10. Specially see the first section – Vatican II's basic treatment of the Church.

[860] See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. I (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1979-1980). See also *Das Mysterium des Tempels: Die Geschichte der Gegenwart Gottes von der Genesis bis zur Apokalyptik* (Salzburg: Müller, 1960).

[861] This concept of 'different nations made as God's heritage' echoes the promise to God's royal son in Psalm 2:8: 'I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession' (NRSV). AG 11 speaks of 'religious traditions' activated by 'seed of the Word' and further AG 18 points to 'traditions of asceticism and contemplation' as an example of such religious traditions.

and dialogue as fundamental elements and starting-points of Christian mission, but also the influence of Christian life and the power of religious discussion.[862]

The Decree clearly states the role of the Holy Spirit "who calls all men to Christ and arouses in their hearts the submission of faith by the seed of the word" (*ad intra*), "and the preaching of the Gospel" (*ad extra*) (AG 15). Here, according to O' Collins, "the process of moving to Christian faith happens through the word of preaching being addressed to people who, through 'the seeds of the Word', already enjoy, albeit mysteriously, the hidden presence of Christ."[863]

It should be mentioned that *Ad Gentes*, keeping in mind the Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim prayer-life and asceticism, encourages the Roman Catholic religious who work in missionary situations, to "consider attentively how traditions of asceticism and contemplation, the needs of which have been sometimes planted by God in ancient culture prior to the preaching of the Gospel, could be taken up into Christian religious life" (AG 18). Hence, "whatever goodness is found in the minds and hearts of men, or in the particular customs and cultures of peoples, far from being lost is purified, raised to a higher level and reaches its perfection, for the glory of God and the happiness of men" (cf. AG 9, also LG 17). The Decree emphasises that Christ, 'the author of salvation' is also 'the author' of these elements of 'truth and grace,' already found among the nations before they encounter Christian preaching.

To facilitate a response to the Son 'present in creation' (AG 3), the Decree calls for dialogue and collaboration with the religious 'others' (AG 11, 12, 16, 34, 41). It also addresses issues of missionary adaptation and the saving value of non-Christian religions, previously regarded as problematic and challenging by missionary workers and specialists (AG 3, 8, 9, 14, 15, 17; GS 22, 26, 38, 41, 57; LG 16, 17). Daniélou rightly expressed that, there is only one mission that of the Son and all others are only a participation in, and result of this.[864]

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[862] See for further reading, N. Neuner, "Mission, Dialogue und Zeugnis," *Geist und Leben* 38 (1965): 429-443; Hans Joachim Türk, *Was sagt das Konzil über nichtchristliche Religionen, Mission, Toleranz*? (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1967).

[863] O' Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 114.

[864] For further reading, see Jean Daniélou, *The Salvation of the Nations*, trans. Angeline Bouchard (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962). Read specially chapter II – The Mission of the

4.1.2.3 *Dignitatis Humanae*

This Declaration on Religious Freedom, also issued in 1965, professes at the very outset, that God himself has made known to the human race how men by serving him, can be saved and reach happiness in Christ.[865] Stating that the 'one true religion' continues to exist 'in the Catholic and Apostolic Church,' all people are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and his Church, and to embrace it and hold onto it as they come to know it. It emphasises the obligation to follow the truth that touches and binds 'man's conscience' (DH 1). It also acknowledges that every "human person has a right to religious freedom" and "nobody is forced to act against his convictions in religious matters in private or in public" and this right "to religious freedom should be given every recognition" (DH 2).

Speaking about truth, this Declaration affirms that God orders, directs and governs the whole world according to a plan conceived in his wisdom and love, enabling humanity to arrive at a deeper knowledge of unchangeable truth. Kasper opines that each one has the right to seek and search for this truth, and in this search one is bound to follow his conscience faithfully so that he may come to God, the last end. [866] Nobody should be prevented from acting according to his/her conscience. Any attempt to deny a person the free existence of religion in society, amounts to injustice not only to the human person but also to the very order established by God for humanity (DH 3).[867]

In spreading religious beliefs, the Decree considers any action "which seems to suggest coercion or dishonesty or unworthy persuasion," as "abuse of one's own right and an infringement of the rights of others" (DH 4). Neither can public authority "compel its

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Word (16-29), chapter IV – Incarnation and Transfiguration (49-65) and chapter V – Mission and Second Coming (66-89).

[865] Cf. Hahnenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*, 147-155. Also cf. K. Rahner und H. Vorgrimler, *Kleines Konzilskompendium: Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanums*, nineteenth edition (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1986). See specially chapter XVI, *Die Erklärung über die Religionsfreiheit „Dignitatis Humanae*," 655-675; E. W. Böckenförde, „Religionsfreiheit als Aufgabe der Christen," *StdZ* 176 (1965); Jeffery Gros, "Declaration on Religious Freedom: *Dignitatis Humanae*," in *Evangelization and Religious Freedom*, Stephen B. Bevans and Jeffrey Gros (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 151-248.

[866] Kasper, "The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*," 15. Kasper opines that this document recognised the freedom of conscience and religion and acknowledged the right to truth, which can only be discerned in freedom.

[867] Walter Kasper, „Religionsfreiheit als theologisches Problem," in *Freiheit der Religion: Christentum und Islam unter dem Anspruch der Menschenrechte*, Johannes Schwartländer (Mainz: Mattias-Grünewald, 1993), 214.

citizens by force or fear or any other means to profess or repudiate any religion or to prevent anyone from joining or leaving a religious body" which seriously results in the "transgression of God's will and of the sacred right of the individual person" (DH 6).

The Declaration observes that religious freedom is rooted in divine revelation (DH 9), and it is God, the source of truth, who 'calls men to serve him in spirit and truth.' However, God respects and regards the dignity of the human person and the freedom that he himself has gifted humanity. Humanity is called to seek and bear witness to the truth like Jesus himself (cf. Jn 18:37), who brought this truth to its perfection "when he accomplished on the cross the work of redemption by which he achieved salvation and true freedom for men" (DH 11).

In being faithful to the truth of the Gospel, it is the duty and obligation of the Church, even today, to follow "the path of Christ and the apostles" in recognising "the principle that religious liberty is in keeping with the dignity of man and of divine revelation." The Church has always adhered to the teaching that "no one is to be coerced into believing" and "in religious matters the human person should be kept free from all manner of coercion in civil society" (DH 12).

Kasper opines that issues like freedom of religion and human rights have become emerging problems in the Church and her theology.[868] Analysing this concept of freedom in the Bible and especially in relation to the history of Israel, he opines that it is God who frees and who delivers. This truth is also reflected in the good news of Jesus Christ (Lk 4: 8) and, according to St. Paul, Christ is the one who, has set us free (Gal 5:1).[869] Finally, Kasper declares that Christianity, from its very beginning, claimed to announce the eschatological and definitive truth about God, about man and about the world;[870] God, as

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[868] For more on tolerance and freedom of religion, see Hugo Rahner, *Kirche und Staat im frühen Christentum* (München: Kösel, 1961); John Courtney Murray, *The Problem of Religious Freedom* (Westminster, Maryland: Woodstock, 1965); Jérome Hamer und Yves Congar, ed., *Die Konzilserklärung über die Religionsfreiheit, Konfessionskundliche und kontroverstheologische Studien*, Band XX (Paderborn: Bonifatius-Dr., 1967), 125-165; R. Aubert, „Das Problem der Religionsfreiheit in der Geschichte des Christentums," in *Zur Geschichte der Toleranz und Religionsfreiheit* ed. Heinrich Lutz (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges., 1977), 422-454; B. Kötting, *Religionsfreiheit und Toleranz im Altertum* (Opladen: Westdt., 1977).

[869] Kasper, „Religionsfreiheit als theologisches Problem," 210.

[870] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Absolutheitsanspruch des Christentums," *Sacramentum Mundi* 1 (1967): 39-44; Walter Kasper, ed., *Absolutheit des Christentums*, *QD* 79 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1977).

the creator and Father of all people and Jesus, as the mediator of salvation for all people. This is the message of salvation for the entire humanity.[871]

4.1.2.4 Some Other Documents

In addition to the three documents of the Second Vatican Council discussed above, it is important to at least mention, if not discuss, other Papal and Synodal documents such as *Mysterium filii Dei* (published in 1972, dealing with the errors concerning the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity), *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (declaration issued in 1973 in defence of the Catholic doctrine on the Church against some errors), *Ratione Habita* (October 1967) and *Ultimis Temporibus* (November 1967) (both dealing with dangerous opinions and Atheism) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (written in 1975 extensively discussing evangelisation in the modern world), were some important magisterial teachings that provided appropriate directions and guidelines to the teachings on the Catholic doctrine, the Church and evangelisation. These Papal and Synodal documents tried to confirm and defend certain dogmatic truths pertaining to the person of Jesus Christ, universal salvation, the Church and her mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

4.1.3 Directions and Orientations after the Second Vatican Council

4.1.3.1 *Redemptor Hominis*

This encyclical of 1979, given less than five months after the installation of Pope John Paul II, laid the blueprint for his pontificate.[872] Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the redeemer of humanity, this encyclical attempted to explore the human problems of the time and to propose appropriate solutions. Kasper perceives a very strong Christocentric character in this encyclical.[873]

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[871] Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen: Eine Vision der Kirchenväter* (München: Pustet, 1971). According to Ratzinger, the truth about God as the Creator of the world, and Jesus as the salvation of humanity, and the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation, was the foundation of the Church Fathers for their teachings concerning the dignity of humanity and a vision for a world of peace and brotherhood.

[872] Cf. Thomas Roddey, *Das Verhältnis der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen*. Paderborner Theologische Studien (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005), 107-137.

[873] Kasper, „Neuansätze gegenwärtiger Christologie," 17.

The encyclical begins with a reference to "the dialogue of Salvation" that was proposed by Pope Paul VI.[874] Engaged in such a dialogue of salvation, the Church needs to respond with universal openness, in order that all may be able to find in her "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (cf. Eph 3:8). Referring to the genuine historical situation of Christianity and the world, the only possibility is that of seeking "sincerely, perseveringly, humbly and also courageously the ways of drawing closer and of union." The encyclical further encourages the search for this unity "without being discouraged at the difficulties that can appear or accumulate along the road; otherwise we would be unfaithful to the word of Christ, we would fail to accomplish his testament" (RH 6).

There is only one direction for our intellect, will and heart, and this is: setting our Spirit and constantly aiming at him: "towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ, the Redeemer of man" because "there is salvation in no one else but him, the Son of God" (RH 7). The encyclical constantly refers back to the Second Vatican Council, which expressed its deep respect for the great spiritual values present in the non-Christian religions, which in the life of mankind find expression in religion and then in morality.[875]

The encyclical includes further reminders that the Church's fundamental function in every age is to direct humanity's gaze, awareness and experience "towards the mystery of God," and "to help all men to be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus" (RH 10). It acknowledges that the Church should concentrate and focus on this mission "since it is more necessary than ever for modern mankind" and that "if this mission seems to encounter greater opposition nowadays than ever before, this shows that today it is more necessary than ever and, in spite of the opposition, more awaited than ever" (RH 11).

Today, even after two millennia, Christ is seen as the one who brings humanity freedom based on truth, who frees humanity from what curtails, diminishes and breaks off this freedom at its root, in the individual's soul, heart and conscience (RH 12). Jesus becomes, in a way, newly present, "with the power of the truth and the love that are expressed in

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[874] Cf. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), no 70.

[875] Kurt Krenn, „Ein neuer Weg zu religiöser Erfahrung in der Enzyklika „*Redemptor hominis*" von Johannes Paul II," *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 15, no.1 (1982): 45-57.

him with unique unrepeatable fullness in spite of the shortness of his life on earth and the even greater shortness of his public activity" (RH 13).

Kasper believes that we as Christians can advocate authentically our claim of Christian truth only when we simultaneously commit ourselves to freedom and forgiveness. However, the issue of freedom of religion and the "actuation of this right is one of the fundamental tests of humanity's authentic progress in any regime, in any society, system or milieu" (RH 17)[876]

4.1.3.2 *Redemptoris Missio*

Pope St. John Paul II issued this Encyclical Letter in 1990, twenty-five years after the publication of the Decree on Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*) and fifteen years after the Apostolic Exhortation (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*), calling upon the Church to renew her missionary commitment.[877] Admitting that the number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase (RM 3), this encyclical adds another important consideration. It argues not only in christological terms but also from the pneumatological point of view. The Spirit of God embraces everything, and is present and active without limitation in space and time.[878] The Spirit works in the heart of every person who aspires to truth and goodness, and who sincerely seeks God. The Spirit provides every human being with light and strength for his supreme vocations, and offers to all the possibility "of coming in contact with the Paschal mystery in a way that only God knows." The presence and action of the Spirit concerns not only the individual person, "but also society and history, peoples, cultures, religions" (RM 28).

The encyclical presents Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, the centre of God's plan of salvation, a truth often asserted in the New Testament books (Acts 4:10, 12; 1 Cor 8:5-6; 1 Tim 2:5-7; Col 2:9), and God's plan to unite all things in Christ (Eph 1:10). To achieve this goal the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God (RM 6, 10). God also offers humanity this newness of life in

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[876] Kasper, „Religionsfreiheit als theologisches Problem," 229.

[877] Cf. Roddey, *Das Verhältnis der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen*, 138-154.

[878] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 143. Kasper highlights here the cosmic dimension of the Spirit, efficacious in the world even before Christ. It is he who works in hearts of all people of good will, offering them the possibility of grace. See also RM 28; AG 4; GS 22; cf. also NA 2.

Christ through the Church (first beneficiary of salvation), though every individual has the freedom to reject this offer (RM 7).

The universality of salvation is granted to all, and hence salvation must be made concretely present to all. The encyclical makes it clear that there are social and cultural conditions which at times do not permit people, or do not provide them opportunities, to come to know or accept the Gospel. Such people can attain salvation in Christ by virtue of grace which, "while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way accommodated to their spiritual and material situation" (RM 10). It is this grace that enables each person to attain salvation, albeit through his or her freewill and cooperation. The Church, the sign and instrument of salvation, therefore never fails and cannot fail to proclaim that "Jesus came to reveal the face of God and to merit salvation for all humanity by his cross and resurrection" (RM 11).

It also makes clear the purpose of the incarnation and mission of Jesus: to bring integral salvation, salvation that embraces the entire person and all humanity. Hence, the Church's mission is to proclaim this newness of life in Jesus Christ to every age, because "all are called to it and destined for it," even those who are indeed "searching for it" but "in a confused way." It warns the Church and its members from hiding or monopolising "this newness and richness" of life in Jesus Christ, "which has been received from God's bounty" (RM 11). Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, repeats the request of Pope St. John Paul II, that "there must be no lessening of the impetus of preaching the Gospel" to those who are far from Christ, "because this is the first task of the Church" (RM 34; EG 15).

In the light of the preceding discussions, it could be undoubtedly affired that, the idea of anonymous Christians of Karl Rahner is frequently highlighted (though in a passive manner). This is what even Kasper endeavours to explain in his Spirit-Christology. The teachings of the Council rendered obsolete the older exclusivist theory and praxis which reasoned that since Jesus Christ is the only mediator of salvation and that no one can be saved if he does not profess the faith and belong to the Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla*

salus).[879] Kasper clarifies that this axiom was not reprimanding those who did not belong to the Church but rather was a warning and admonition (*Paraklese*) to those who belonged to the Church, but were on the verge of leaving.[880]

To conclude, Catholic theology confirms the following: Salvation in which non-Christians share, if they live according to their conscience, is not a salvation outside Jesus Christ, but rather a salvation in and through him; *communis opinio* of Catholic Theology.

4.1.4 *Dominus Iesus* and Universal Salvation in Jesus Christ

Though the intention and purpose of *Dominus Iesus* was to give a positive appraisal of the doctrinal teachings of the Church, it has unfortunately been the subject of intense scrutiny. It also sought to check the tendencies "of some Catholic theologians who, for the sake of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, have cast some aspects of traditional Catholic belief in a purely relativistic framework."[881] Issues concerning the context in which this ecclesial document was drafted, and the purpose of the Magisterium in issuing this document, have been outlined briefly in the first chapter of this work. The following discussions are restricted to some crucial issues which have not yet had proper clarifications and definite answers.

4.1.4.1. *Dominus Iesus*: Critical and Problem-provoking Insights

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith during the publication of this document, explained clearly that this Declaration was planned as a request to all Christians to open themselves anew to the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the Lord, and thus give a profound meaning to the Great Jubilee.[882] Joseph Kallarangatt clearly opines that this work is,

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[879] Cf. Kasper, „Der ekklesiologische Charakter der nichtkatholischen Kirchen," 42-62.

[880] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen: Sind die nichtchristlichen Religionen heilsbedeutsam?" in *Wort Gottes in der Zeit,* ed. Helmut Feld und Josef Nolte (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1973), 358.

[881] Billy, "*Dominus Jesus*: Reception and Levels of Dialogue," 2.

[882] See *L'Osservatore Romano*, 22 November 2000. The term 'Jubilee' speaks of joy, not just an inner joy but a jubilation manifested even outwardly for the coming of God in the person of Jesus Christ. It is thus an outward, visible, and tangible event and the year 2000 was declared as 'Jubilee Year.'

> Published on the basis of a feeling that the genuine truth revealed in Jesus Christ has been relativized… it is formulated in the context of the conflict between traditional Christian faith and liberal thinking… Attitudes toward ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, Judaism, etc., also have considerably changed in the recent past. These situations propelled the CDF to chalk out the mainline thinking of the Catholic tradition… the document is not only concerned with correcting erroneous texts of Catholic theologians and ecumenists, it also points out sectors where more theological reflection is open and needed.[883]

The theory that all religions are the same and that Christ is just one among the many divinely inspired prophetic figures (relativist pluralism), is strongly refuted by this document. It points out certain truths that have been superseded, some diluted, endangering the Church's missionary proclamation such as:

> the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability — while recognizing the distinction — of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church (DI 4).

The Declaration calls to unequivocally accept the doctrine of faith, which proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth is the son of Mary, and that he alone is the Son and the Word of the Father. The Word, which "was in the beginning with God" (Jn 1:2) is the same as he who "became flesh" (Jn 1:14). In Jesus, "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16), "the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9) (DI 10). Similarly, it maintains that salvation that comes from the Triune God in the person of Jesus Christ must be firmly believed and it further reasserts that Jesus Christ is the mediator and the universal redeemer (DI 11). The role of the Spirit of the Risen Lord is also highlighted as actively affecting not only individuals but also history and society, peoples, cultures and religions. It asserts the fact that the Risen Christ is now at work in human hearts through the strength of his Spirit,

[883] Joseph Kallarangatt, "A Theological Look Into *Dominus Jesus*," *Christian Orient* XXII/I (2001): 23.

and "it is the Spirit who sows the 'seeds of the word' present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ" (DI 12; RM 28).

The third chapter of *Dominus Iesus* addresses the Unicity and the Salvific Mystery of Jesus Christ, and affirms certain tenets to be believed in. These have aroused many adverse reactions and negative feelings especially among the Jewish community. It emphatically states, first of all, that Jesus Christ, the only Saviour, "through the event of his incarnation, death and resurrection has brought the history of salvation to fulfilment" (DI 13). "The Catholic Church," writes American Theologian Dennis Billy "would be disingenuous if it gave its partners in dialogue the impression that one religion were as good as the next or that all of them had equal access to the truth."[884] Therefore, it is also necessary to establish the positive elements in other religions and reflect on how they are contained in the divine plan of salvation.

The Declaration makes it clear that the "unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source" (LG 62; DI 14). It directs that the content of this participated mediation "must remain always consistent with the principle of Christ's unique mediation" (DI 14). These participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded but "they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation, as they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to him" (RM 5; DI 14). Jesus Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute, and precisely this uniqueness of Christ "gives him an absolute and universal significance whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history's centre and goal" (DI 15).

Another important affirmation of this Declaration is found in Chapter VI, no. 20 which states:

> Above all else, it must be *firmly believed* that "the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. *Mk* 16:16; *Jn* 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of

[884] Billy, "*Dominus Jesus*: Reception and Levels of Dialogue," 4.

> the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door".[885] This doctrine must not be set against the universal salvific will of God (cf.*1 Tim* 2:4); "it is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of the Church for this salvation".[886]

Vehement reactions on the part of the Jews were centred on the opinion that "this Vatican text logically points towards a hard-line interpretation of the adage *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*… Jewish theologians named this document as a public relations disaster and even demanded a revision of the document."[887] A careful theological approach to this technically formulated Declaration and a focus on the actual content of the document might lead the reader to the correct understanding and intended message of this theological promulgation.

4.1.4.2 *Dominus Iesus*: Theological Approach – The Need of the Hour

In order to understand the purpose as well as the theological concerns of *Dominus Iesus*, it is necessary to have a sound theological background; otherwise, it is highly probable that one might misinterpret its intent and form personal erroneous opinions.

Dominus Iesus, a Catholic theological document, is a doctrinal exposition of the Catholic faith, a small catechism of the Catholic Church, pro-ecumenical and pro-dialogic. In other words, this document could be as a 'position paper' of the Catholic Church. In the history of the Church, countless such position papers from the respective leaders of Judaism, Protestantism, Anglicanism and Eastern Orthodoxy have been written, and the Catholic Church has not attacked such works nor has it reacted to them emotionally. Further, this Declaration should be read as a Papal/Vatican document which customarily adopts an established style, with a different language and methodological approach to theological discourse, different from that of the Eastern Churches. Its language, which may be unfamiliar, may cause great concern, and hence care and proper focus is necessary to avoid unintended misinterpretation. It is important when reading such a document or

[885] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* 14; cf. Decree *Ad Gentes* 7; Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3.

[886] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* 9; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 846-847.

[887] Kallarangatt, "A Theological Look Into *Dominus Jesus*," 24.

Vatican Declaration to recognise the Catholicity it professes and certain principles and positions of Catholic theology to which it refers.[888]

It is quite true that this document omits much that the Second Vatican Council addresses, namely, the non-Christian religions, because such a detailed narration is not intended here. "*Dominus Iesus* is, in fact, a technical document with limited intent."[889] One must be a competent theologian to understand the inner meaning of this document, and also assess the proper context of the cited texts. The reader is also expected to have an adequate knowledge of Second Vatican Council and should be also familiar with the writings of Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI), who issued this document, as well as those of the then Pope John Paul II. These two prerequisites are essential because the document is deeply rooted in the vision of the Second Vatican Council, and it refers constantly to the said Council. From the dogmatic, doctrinal and Catholic point of view, material contained in *Dominus Iesus* is entirely accurate, however, when certain doctrine is over-emphasised, it may lead to different reactions. The difficulty lies in overstressing the doctrinal, rather than the personal aspects of revelation and faith.[890] To Kasper, the personal dimension of revelation is the most basic reality and hence he maintains:

> God, the deepest ground of all reality, shows himself to be a *personal being*, an 'I', whom men and women may address as a 'Thou'. For in the self-revelation of the mystery, God does not reveal *something*, not even something of himself and about himself. Here, rather, he becomes manifest in that which he *is*: as the mystery of love. So God does not reveal something, in the sense of some supra-rational and supra-natural truths and realities: he reveals himself. According to the Christian understanding, revelation is the self-revelation of God, in the sense of God's personal communication of himself to human beings.[891]

Right understanding of the true Trinitarian approach towards the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Spirit is equally necessary to understand this document. Kasper observes that among Christian theologians there is a tendency to speak about the activity

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[888] This Vatican Document, avoiding diplomacy and in the best way possible, says exactly what it has to say. It is faithful to the mainline traditions of the Church.

[889] Kallarangatt, "A Theological Look into *Dominus Iesus*," 26.

[890] Cf. Joseph Neuner, "The Fullness of Revelation: Reflections on the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*," *VJTR* 65 (2001): 7-13

[891] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 26.

of the Spirit, disconnecting it from the activity of Christ, as if the activity of the Spirit is wider and more universal than that of Christ himself. According to Kasper and also *Dominus Iesus*, the Spirit is not an alternative to Christ and hence is not to be considered separate from Christ. No person of the Trinity is prior to, or after the other, rather, the Trinity is always together, because, "Theirs is an undivided and equal Godhead, majesty and power, which is neither diminished in the single persons nor increased in the three. For it is not less when each person is called God separately, nor is it greater when all three persons are called one God."[892]

Today, there is a wave called Christomonism in the Church and its proponents declare that Jesus Christ alone, to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit, is the true God. Conversely, where the value of the Incarnate Word is neglected and the action of the Spirit exalted, there is a danger of falling into Pentecostalism, which is no less misleading from what Catholic theology teaches. This is why Kasper stresses the need to keep Christ and the Spirit together, and, though distinct in their features and office, they can neither be separated nor opposed. Yves Congar expresses this idea eloquently when he states, "There is no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology."[893] There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God. This economy is realised in the mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God, with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. Today, this salvific value of Christ extends throughout humanity and to the entire universe.

Dominus Iesus is not to be considered as an extensive treatise on ecclesiology or ecumenism. Only those ecclesiological and ecumenical notions necessary to emphasise Christ's living and concrete presence in history are stated. It focuses on the ecclesial character of faith which must help the faithful to commune with the Church. The primary concern is to facilitate the same faith of the Church under changed circumstances, and to revitalise it.[894] The Church is the way, the way of tradition.[895] In this manner, it clarifies that Christianity is something which one receives, and not something which one creates.

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[892] Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 149. Specially see no. 312. Also refer nos. 16, 19, 22, 24, 315, 325, 620/1 and 627/1.

[893] Yves Congar, *The Word and Spirit* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 1986); Kallarangatt, "A Theological Look Into *Dominus Jesus*," 29.

[894] Joseph Ratzinger and Victoria H. Lane, *Feast of Faith: Approaches to the Theology of Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 84.

[895] Cf. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 137-141, 148-165.

If Christ is necessary for salvation, the Church, the sacramental presence of Christ in the Spirit, is equally necessary for salvation. The Declaration states that "Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (cf. Col 1:24-27)" (DI 16; LG 7). This pertains directly to the very core of the document: the necessity of the Church for salvation. Jesus Christ and the Church, though not identical, can neither be separated nor be confused. However, it does not deny the action of the Spirit of Christ outside the visible confines of the Church, thus avoiding an exclusive understanding of salvation. Kasper agrees that the Church always safeguarded the universal character of the grace of Christ. "When one takes the universal character of the grace of Christ seriously, it is not possible to bring Christianity and the non-Christian religions into opposition with each other."[896] Further, "equality, which is the pre-supposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content" (DI 22). Kasper also admits the veracity of each religion, "Every religion is to that extent true, and represents the one universal will of salvation of God in Jesus Christ, in so far as it is universal and catholic in this dynamic sense… Every religion is true to the extent that it –objectively not subjectively – manifests a *votum ecclesiae*."[897]

4.1.4.3 *Dominus Iesus*: Asia's Anticipation

The Asian Church had actually anticipated *Dominus Iesus* and therefore it was already working on a possible appropriate response, well before this Vatican document was published. Soon after this Vatican Declaration was issued, the Asian Church, through the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and specifically its Office of Theological Concerns (OTC),[898] issued a document on "Doing Theology in Asia Today"[899] which was published in October, 2000 immediately after *Dominus Iesus*. It is

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[896] Walter Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" in *Evangelization: Dialogue and Development*, ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony (Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1972), 160.

[897] Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 166.

[898] The FABC-Office of Theological Concerns was originally simply a Theological Advisory Commission (TAC) consisting of a team of theologians: one from each of the member bishops' conferences of the FABC but two from India and the Philippines. The team meets once a year usually to work on a document, a topic requested by the FABC Central Committee or one chosen with the latter's approval. The findings of the deliberations are published as FABC Papers with a hope that it will stimulate further discussions and reflections at the local level.

[899] For the entire document see FABC Paper 96. *Methodology: Asian Christian Theology* (Doing Theology in Asia Today). A Document of the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, October 2000.

therefore appropriate to take a closer look at both these documents, and to compare the position of each with the other.

The central concern of *Dominus Iesus* is relativism, and the FABC-OTC's paper on Asian Christian Theology[900] also begins by addressing the threat of relativism. It starts with the affirmation that there is a plurality of methods in doing theology, just as "the world created by God is pluriform" (para 4). Therefore pluralism "need not always entail a radical subjectivism or relativism, in the sense of claiming that all points of view are equally valid," and therefore "we cannot conclude that all pluralism leads to relativism" (para 6). The document highlights the mandate of the Second Vatican Council, i.e., promoting pluralism in theology, and it encourages the adaptation of the gospel message according to each culture (GS. 44) (para 7). It also notes the significant contribution of FABC since its inception in 1970 in its consistent advocacy of pluralism in theology and its assertion that "pluralism should not be a threat to our Christian unity. On the contrary, it is a positive and creative sign that our unity is deeper than whatever the concrete technical analysis or viewpoints might show: a genuine value that emphasizes unity in diversity" (para 8).[901]

This document further admits that "the Church cannot allow doctrinal irresponsibility or indifferentism" and that "legitimate theological pluralism ought to meet the basic standards of revelation (being absolutely faithful to what is conveyed through Scripture and Tradition), of *sensus fidelium* (as contained in the faith of the People of God as a whole), and of the Magisterium of the Church" (para 10).

Where *Dominus Iesus* is apprehensive about the influence of the other religious traditions and relegates them to "belief" and "religious experience still in search of the absolute truth" (DI 12), the FABC-OTC document informs that "today Asians are doing theology and draw nourishment from their Asian cultures" where a "sense of Sacred is fundamental" and where there is "a respect for the Sacred and for the experiences of the Sacred of various communities and religious traditions" (para 2). It is clear that "the

[900] This 100-pages document is intended to deal on the different theological methods employed especially by Asian theologians. However, this document does not define or propose any definite method for doing theology in Asia.

[901] Chia, "FABC's Response to *Dominus Jesus*," 234.

Asian Christian is open to dialogue, a dialogue based on profound respect for individuals, communities and their religious traditions" (para 3).[902]

Furthermore, *Dominus Iesus* "reserves the designation of inspired texts to the canonical books of the Old and New Testament" (DI 8), but the FABC-OTC document asserts that "Asian Christian exegetes accept the inspiration of the Scriptures of other religions as a mystery that harmonizes with the Incarnation of the divine Logos in Jesus Christ" (para 40). From the above discussions it can be concluded that the Asian way of theologising is "one of integration and inclusion" (para 3) and definitely not one that uses language, terms and principles that are absolute and exclusive.

4.1.4.4 *Dominus Iesus*: Kasper's Reflections and Clarifications

Walter Kasper, as President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, delivered a lecture on May 1, 2001, at the 17th meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, held in New York City. His lecture was a response to the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* which had sparked a variety of reactions by various people and communities throughout the world.[903]

At the very outset, Kasper admitted that a highly technical language used in this Declaration has raised misunderstandings especially among people unfamiliar with Catholic theology. He claimed that uninformed secular massmedia were also responsible for provoking and galvanising many of the negative reactions, due to the lack of right understanding. He reiterated that interpretation of Jesus as the Son of God was the point of contention on which Jews and Christians disagreed many centuries ago. These differences deserve mutual respect although at the same time they evoke painful memories of the past. Hence, he admitted that this document has disturbed and offended the Jews, contrary to the intent of the Declaration.

However, Kasper, in no way finds any problem with this Declaration since it deals basically with interreligious dialogue, placing Jesus Christ and the Church at the centre.

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[902] Chia, "FABC's Response to *Dominus Jesus*," 234-235.

[903] The following passages are a synthesis from Kasper's above-mentioned address. This reply did calm down the infuriated Jewish communities and opened the eyes of many, inviting for a broader understanding and interpretation of the declaration as a whole. For the entire lecture, visit: http://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/analysis/497-kasper01may1 (accessed December 15, 2010).

Furthermore, it argues against some newer relativistic and, to some degree, syncretistic theories among Christian theologians, theories spread in India and in the Western, so-called post-modern world as well. Kasper maintained that this Declaration argues against theories that deny the specific identity of Jewish and Christian religion, and which do not take into account the distinction between faith as answer to God's revelation and belief as human search for God and human religious wisdom.[904] In his response to the Declaration, Kasper seeks to present the following reflections and elucidations:

a) The presumption which Jewish readers tend to have after reading *Dominus Iesus*, that the Church's attitude towards Jews and Judaism is a sub-category of its attitude towards world religions, is mistaken because this document in no way represents "a backward step in a concerted attempt to overturn the dialogue of recent decades."[905]
b) This Declaration does not affect Catholic-Jewish relations in a negative way, since it does not deal with the theology of Catholic-Jewish relations. Rather, it tries to review the attempts made by some Christian theologians to find a kind of universal theology of interreligious relations. These attempts have sometimes lead Christian theologians astray, giving rise in a way to indifferentism, relativism and syncretism.
c) Mention in the Declaration that dialogue is a part of evangelisation is what stirred Jewish suspicion. In theological language – evangelisation is a very complex term and its reality implies: presence and witness, prayer and liturgy, dialogue and social work. Hence, increasing the number of Catholics through evangelisation is in no way its goal.
d) According to the mind of this Declaration as well as the Catholic Church, dialogue is more than a mere exchange of opinions. Dialogue implies personal commitment to, and witnessing of one's own conviction and faith. Dialogue communicates one's faith and, at the same time, requires profound respect for the conviction and faith of the partner, respecting the difference of the other, thus seeking mutual enrichment.
e) This declaration, contrary to the misunderstandings of many, does not state that everybody needs to become a Catholic in order to be saved by God. On the contrary, it declares that God's grace, which is the grace of Jesus Christ according to Catholic faith, is available to all. Therefore, the Church believes that the Jewish religion i.e.,

[904] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe: Ökumenische Perspektiven der Zukunft," in *Von der „Gemeinsamen Erklärung" zum „Gemeinsamen Herrenmahl,"* ed. Ernst Pulsfort und Rolf Hanusch (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2002), 222-223.

[905] Note that these words in inverted commas are the comments of a Jewish scholar, which Kasper quotes.

the faithful response of the Jewish people to God's irrevocable covenant, is salvific for them, because God is faithful to his promises.

Kasper provides an appropriate conclusion, inviting further dialogue and sharing. He desires that such dialogues help both parties in revealing and recognising their common mission and thereby, provide right orientation and movement towards it. He concludes:

> *Dominus Iesus* is not the end of dialogue but a challenge for a further and even more intensive dialogue. We need this dialogue for our own identity and for the sake of the world. In today's world, we, Jews and Christians, have a common mission: together we should give an orientation. Together we must be ambassadors of peace and bring about *Shalom*.[906]

Kasper agrees that *Dominus Iesus* has given rise to doubts especially about the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. He confirms that many commentators are disappointed with the tone and style of the document, as with the interpretation and message. Kasper makes clear that these existing and undeniable differences, which have resulted in irritations, are neither reasons for resignation nor fear for the end of dialogue. They are rather a challenge to dialogue. Finally, he says, "In any case, this document does not represent any substantial change in the attitude of the Catholic Church; correctly interpreted it remains basically on the line of the Second Vatican Council."[907]

4.1.5 *Ecclesia in Asia*: Its Purpose and Need of Pedagogy

At this juncture, it is important to briefly address the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*,[908] given by Pope John Paul II in New Delhi, India on 6th November 1999. This Apostolic Exhortation had, among its many purposes, the following central aim: to enable the Church in Asia to reflect on the person and mystery of Jesus Christ and to encourage a renewed commitment to the mission of making Jesus Christ better known

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[906] These are the concluding words of Kasper's address on *Dominus Iesus* at the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, New York City.

[907] Walter Kasper, "Current Problems in Ecumenical Theology," *Ephrem's Theological Journal* 7 (2003): 110.

[908] For the entire Apostolic Exhortation visit the following website: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html (accessed January 27, 2015).

to all. Pope Francis also strongly reiterates the words of Pope St. John Paul II who stated that "if the Church in Asia is to fulfil its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority" (EA 2).[909] He added that, the Church in Asia had the mandate of illustrating and explaining "more fully the truth that Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of the world, who is to be clearly distinguished from the founders of other great religions."[910] In other words, he exhorted Christians in Asia to proclaim with renewed vigour: *Ecce natus est nobis Salvator mundi*, "Behold the Saviour of the World is born to us," born in Asia! (EA 2).

This Exhortation gives the Church in Asia some guidelines and directions, including some suggestions and proposals for witnessing the Gospel, besides promotion of humanity. In general, it calls for a spirit of solidarity, and the zeal to serve, to work and to continue the act of redemption. The mission practise of the Asian churches of love and service, as mentioned by the Synod Fathers, is guided by "her self-understanding as a community of disciples of Jesus Christ gathered around her Pastors" (EA 5). As mentioned earlier, the Exhortation appreciates the Asians who love their religious and cultural values and hold them dear, especially respect for life. Their love for these values seen in their compassion for all beings, their filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, etc., their closeness to nature, which is predominantly evident in their nature worship; and also their sense of community, exhibiting a spirit of tolerance and striving for peaceful co-existence, is note worthy (EA 6).

As mentioned earlier, the Apostolic Exhortation has also posed some challenges to the proclamation of the salvific message of Jesus, which the Church is Asia encounter, address, and discuss at regular intervals, and on different levels. The negative aspects highlighted by the media industry such as violence, hedonism etc. which threaten traditional values on the one hand, and the effects of individualism and materialism, on the other, have indeed posed a great challenge, both "to the Church and to the proclamation of her message" (EA 7).

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[909] Cf. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November, 2014), 110. Pope Francis states that these words hold true not only for the churches in Asia and for the Asian bishops, but for the universal Church.

[910] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November, 1994), 38.

The Exhortation also recommends that the Church in Asia should focus her attention on the intense yearning for God displayed by the people, and "proclaim with vigour in word and deed that *Jesus is the Saviour*" (EA 9). Proclaiming Jesus as the only universal Saviour and Mediator can present particular difficulties in Asian cultures. On the one hand, many Asian religions teach divine manifestation as mediating salvation and on the other hand, non-Christian religions and their followers have difficulty in accepting Jesus as the only Saviour (EA 20). In this regard, the Exhortation calls the Church in Asia to follow "pedagogy in presenting and proclaiming Jesus Christ as the only Saviour which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery" (EA 20; EG 171).[911] The Synod Fathers also noted that the Church must be open to new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus may be presented in Asia.

This has been one of the greatest challenges of the Synod to the Asian Church and to leading thinkers, especially theologians. Even Indian theologians, in the context of religious pluralism and inculturation, have chosen this aspect of the Synod as a priority, but in the process have encountered major difficulties, thus leaving the task of suggesting a suitable pedagogy unfinished. A deeper and wider exploration, however, is still required, if Jesus is to be proclaimed as unique, universal and the only one Mediator and Saviour of the world.

4.1.5.1 Reception of *Ecclesia in Asia* by *Ecclesia* in Asia

Although the official promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, was proclaimed as "a moment of special grace" (EA 3), Peter Phan argues that the Synod has drawn "both favourable and unfavourable comments, especially with regard to its *lineamenta* and its *modus operandi*… the immediate reception of the Exhortation has been, as to be expected, mixed: in was received in some quarters with unfeigned enthusiasm; in others, with muted applause; still in others, with unalloyed

[911] Pope Francis here recalls to mind the words of Thomas Aquinas that anyone can have grace and charity, and yet falter in the exercise of the virtues because of persistent contrary inclinations. In other words, the organic unity of the virtues always and necessarily exists in *habitu*, even though forms of conditioning can hinder the operations of those virtuous habits. Hence, the need for pedagogy. But reaching a level of maturity where individuals can make truly free and responsible decisions, calls for much time and patience.

disappointment."[912] Michael Fahey, a highly respected American ecclesiologist comments the following:[913]

> Despite high hopes for their success, results of synods have been negligible. Each new synod attracts less and less attention; the structure of their sessions have become unwieldy, they have become rituals with little practical impact on the life of the Church. In the last 30 years the institution has not been notable as a wellspring of new ideas and strategies.

The Apostolic Exhortation that follows the continental synods is supposed to incorporate the synods' propositions but is often suspected of having being filtered, bringing the Exhortation to an officially accepted and presentable level, lengthy and turgid in style.[914] This generates little interest even among the clergy and theologians. It is also unrealistic to expect the laity to read and understand the document in its entirety, let alone become motivated to implement its provisions. The purpose here is not to criticise or cast a cynical eye on *Ecclesia in Asia* but to analyse and examine to what extent this Exhortation has taken seriously the 59 propositions of the Asian Synod. Only eight of the propositions appeared in *Ecclesia in Asia*.

The doctrinal and pastoral teaching of *Ecclesia in Asia* has to be analysed with a dual reference to its major themes and the particular situations of Asia. Of all the five Special Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops[915] that Pope St. John Paul II convoked to celebrate the coming of the third millennium of Christianity, the Synod of Asia was, the most exciting, since the Asian Synod was more than just a theological debate.

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[912] Peter C. Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," *EAPR* 37, no. 3 (2000): 215. For other evaluations on this Exhortation see for instance, Chrys McVey, "The Asian Synod: What is at Stake," *EAPR* 35, no. 1 (1998): 143-146; Michael Amaladoss, "Expectations from the Synod," *VJTR* 62 (1998): 144-151; Paul Puthanangady, "Lineamenta for the Asian Synod," *Jeevadhara: A Journal for Socio-Religious Research* XXVII, no. 160 (1997): 231-248; S. Arokiasamy, "Synod for Asia: An Ecclesia Event of Communion and Shared Witness of Faith," *VJTR* 62, no. 9 (1998): 666-675; Luis Antonio Tagle, "The Synod of Asia as Event," *EAPR*, 35, no.3/4 (1998): 366-378.

[913] Michael Fahey, "The Synod of America: Reflections of a Nonparticipant," *TS* 59 (1998): 489.

[914] *Ecclesia in Asia* was the concluding moment of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, popularly known as the "Asian Synod." This four-year project of Church reflection and renewal began with the publication of the *Lineamenta* (1996), continued with the discussion on the *Instrumentum Laboris* (1998), reached its apex with the month-long Synod sessions in Rome (April 19-May 14, 1998) and culminated in the proclamation of the post-synodal *Ecclesia in Asia*. Cf. also James H. Kroeger, "Continuing Pentecost in Asia: Introducing *Ecclesia in Asia*," in *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and* '*Ecclesia in Asia*,' ed. Peter C. Phan (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002), 70.

[915] Africa (1994), America (1997), Asia (1998), Oceania (1998), and Europe (1999).

Michael Amaladoss states categorically, that the "exhortation is a document for Asia. It is not Asian document. It is not the voice of Asia. The tone and style are very un-Asian."[916] Felix Wilfred also highlights this problem when he writes, "I am not able to hear the voices of Asian Bishops in this document as I have heard them speak in the Asian meetings. It is a different voice and a language that is not quite the same as they speak in Asia and at FABC."[917]

John Prior[918] expressed his disappointment with the Exhortation naming it "a papal document." It is "the Pope's response to the voice of the Asian Bishops" and hence it is more the voice of the Pope than that of the Asian Bishops. Prior also points out that Pope St. John Paul II quotes himself sixty-eight times while making "not a single direct reference to any intervention by an individual bishop" or to "regional Episcopal bodies such as Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)." Prior, however, also views this document positively when he points out that reading *Ecclesia in Asia* is "like hearing one end of a telephone conversation. It is certainly worth listening to, but so too is the voice at the other end of the line... Thus, it is important not to read *Ecclesia in Asia* in isolation, but as part of an ongoing conversation."[919] Jonathan Tan Yun-ka from Malaysia, in his comparative analysis of two contrasting approaches to promoting Christian Mission in Asia, says,

> In comparing John Paul II with the FABC, one gets the impression that there are two different voices speaking to two different worlds, and responding to two different sets of challenges. On the one hand, John Paul II's insistence on the need for the proclamation of uniqueness and unicity of Christ for human salvation makes sense in the European milieu, when Christ once claimed the allegiance of the people, but now he competes with agnosticism, secularism, atheism, postmodernism, and even Asian religions making inroads in Europe and the Americas… For him, it makes sense to emphasize Christ as the

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[916] Michael Amaladoss, "*Ecclesia in Asia* Affirms Tradition, Ignores Asian Search," *Asian Focus: Commentary*, 26 November (1999): 3. For more on this these visit: http://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/1999/11/15/ecclesia-in-asia-affirms-tradition-ignores-asian-search&post_id=509 (accessed January 10, 2016).

[917] Felix Wilfred, "Ecclesia in Asia and the Challenges of Evangelization." For more details visit http://www.ocd.pcn.net/mission/News17Congr6.hmt (accessed January 27, 2014).

[918] John Prior, Divine Word Missionary, was the liaison with the English-speaking press during the Synod of Asia held in Rome from April to May 1998.

[919] John Prior, "Unfinished Encounter: A Note on the Voice and Tone of *Ecclesia in Asia*," *EAPR* 37 (2000): 256-271.

one and only Saviour against the seductive challenges of agnosticism, secularism, atheism and indifferentism.[920]

It must be acknowledged that the Asian/Indian bishops do experience hardships with their Christian community as they live in a world of diversity and plurality. Seeking to incarnate the Gospel message and responding to the concrete concerns and existential questions of the peoples, is a major task. Finally, the Exhortation highlights two important truths: Jesus Christ and his mission cannot be known in abstract terms and this Jesus is able to transform the lives of humanity, answer their deepest worries, and give them hope.

4.1.5.2 Some Challenges for Asian Christianity

The topic of evangelisation is not something new or totally alien to Asians. The theological method adopted makes all the difference.[921] The Declaration, as mentioned earlier, besides discussing many other issues, emphasises the "primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelical work" (EA 19) and also that "there can be no true evangelisation without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord" (EA 19). In other words, the Declaration encourages the evangelizers to take St. Paul as a model and learn how to "engage in dialogue with the philosophical, cultural and religious values" (EA 20). These articles of the Declaration sound worthy and convincing, something needed not only for the Church in Asia, but also for the global Church. A closer view of their articulation on evangelisation and proclamation, and the possibility of implementing it in the Asian religious and cultural setting, as mentioned above, are challenging in Asian context.

Cardinal Paul Shan pointed out that "the big question presently confronting us, given the religious and cultural context of Asia, is not why we should proclaim the Good News of

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[920] Cf. Jonathan Tan Yun-ka, "From *Ecclesia in Asia* to the Mission of Love and Service: A Comparative Analysis of Two Contrasting Approaches to Doing Christian Mission in Asia," *EAPR* 41, no. 1 (2004).

[921] Cf. Edmund Chia, "Of Fork and Spoon or Fingers and Chopsticks: Interreligious Dialogue in *Ecclesia in Asia*," *EAPR* 37, no. 3 (2000): 243-255. Chia here uses the analogy of different styles and methods of cooking and eating and finally concludes that whether we eat with fork and spoon or use fingers, the food, especially its contents, remain the same.

Christ's Salvation but *how*."[922] Michael Amaladoss, discussing accusations levelled at Indian theologians for not affirming or rather downplaying Christ as the only saviour pertinently states:

> Reflecting on the mystery of Christ from their multi-religious context they (Indian theologians) are trying to say something new. But they are not being listened to, let alone understood. This may not be due to ill-will. I think that one of the problems is methodology.[923]

The acrimonious discussion concerning the universality of Jesus Christ as the unique Saviour and its proclamation, is another serious difficulty the Asian theologians, especially the Indians, are facing. Amaladoss clearly explains, "this 'face' of Christ will not certainly be acceptable to the other believers in India and Asia."[924] The universality of Jesus Christ as the unique saviour was also the theme of the *Lineamenta*, as it warned "against the danger of partial Christologies, especially those that raised questions about the 'uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the history of salvation.'"[925] The '*how*' of the proclamation has been the real and greatest concern of Christians in Asia. Peter Phan states that the burning issue for the Asian Churches today is "*how* to proclaim this truth about Jesus credibly in the midst of crushing poverty, competing religious systems, and cultural diversity."[926]

Ecclesia in Asia, highlighting the necessity and duty of proclaiming Jesus Christ as the saviour, declares that such a proclamation should neither be interpreted as proselytization nor be understood as prompted by sectarian impulse, imbued with a sense of superiority. It clearly means that proclamation should be practised with "respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life and respect for the action of the Spirit in man" (EA 20). Felix Wilfred acknowledges that a very important achievement of

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[922] Cf. Paul Cardinal Shan, "Presentation of *Ecclesia in Asia* in New Delhi," General Relator, Synod for Asia in *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* LXXVI/18, January-February, Zenith News Agency, Rome, 21 March (2000): 136.

[923] Michael Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions: An Indian Perspective," *VJTR* 63, no. 5 (May, 1999):327.

[924] Michael Amaladoss, "Mission in Asia: A Reflection on *Ecclesia in Asia*," in *The Asian Synod*, ed. Phan, 222.

[925] Peter C. Phan, "The *Lineamenta*," in *The Asian Synod*, ed. Phan, 13.

[926] Peter C. Phan, "Responses of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," in *The Asian Synod*, ed. Phan, 17.

Dignitatis Humanae is reflected here. *Dignitatis Humanae* recognised the freedom of religion, which means fundamentally, the acknowledgement and respect of the otherness of the believers in their spiritual quest. The history of missions, especially in India, has shown by and large, however, that this element was not respected, and hence the failure of non-Christians to accept Jesus Christ was taken as something wrong and condemnable.[927]

Ecclesia in Asia also expresses its concern over the changes in cultural values, the growing consumerism and individualism and also the threat of external influences in Asian ways of life. Though the crux of *Ecclesia in Asia* is Christo-centrism (doctrinal), the interventions from the bishops referred not only to the problem concerning the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ, but also to a greater problem – regarding the Catholic Church as a foreign entity. It is important to note that apart from the indigenous churches in the Near East and Kerala, most of the remaining churches are the result of colonial expansion and missionary activities. This has led to a very strong feeling in Asia, and especially in India, that the Latin Church is a foreign presence.[928] But *Ecclesia in Asia* mentions this issue in a single sentence, as though the entire problem is easily settled, "… the Church in many places was still considered as foreign to Asia, and indeed was often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers" (EA 9).

Interreligious dialogue is a theme that has been developed in depth in Asia, especially in the past several decades. However, only one number of *Ecclesia in Asia* speaks about interreligious dialogue and even this one seems to have a dominant tone of caution rather than encouragement. It states:

> From the Christian point of view, interreligious dialogue is more than a way of fostering mutual knowledge and enrichment; it is part of the Church's evangelizing mission, an expression of the mission *ad gentes*. Christians bring to interreligious dialogue the firm belief that the fullness of salvation comes from Christ alone and that the Church community to which they belong is the *ordinary means* of salvation (EA 31).

[927] Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Ecclesia in Asia and the Challenges of Evangelization."

[928] For more details see article "*Ecclesia in Asia*: An Evaluation," posted by Fr. Nelson Madathikandam on June 23, 2012. http://nelsonmcbs.wordpress.com/2012/06/23/ecclesia-in-asia-an-evaluation (accessed January 25, 2014).

Asians, who are constantly involved in relationship and dialogue with neighbours of other faiths are aware of the actual difficulty involved here. The Exhortation does not appear to serve as a promoter of dialogue since observation may only arouse suspicion and could jeopardize the real intention of dialogue on the part of Christians. Finally, Felix Wilfred believes that although the document is supposed to be from the Synod of Asian Bishops, in reality, "it is cast in a mould that does not represent Asian approach and practise of mission."[929]

4.1.5.3 *Ecclesia in Asia*: A Positive Appraisal

The Asian Synod presented a unique opportunity for the Asian bishops to come together and share perspectives about the experiences and practises in their respective countries. This gave the participants a general and broad overview of the reality in the churches on the Asian continent. Moreover, it created a forum where the prelates in the Vatican together with the Asian bishops could discuss issues relating to the local churches in Asia.[930]

In spite of all these contentious issues and a strong so-called adverse reaction from different concers of the globe, it has to be duly acknowledged that this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "was indeed a time of grace to renew apostolic missionary zeal to proclaim Christ in Asia without being afraid."[931] The Exhortation starts with a positive tone inviting the Church in Asia to rejoice and proclaim God's goodness because Jesus "took flesh as an Asian" (EA 2). It also acknowledges and appreciates the goodness of the people of this continent, its culture and religious vitality, its conscious awareness of the unique gift of faith that Asia has received. Calling for a renewed Church in Asia as the task of the new millennium, the Synod constantly reiterates that the Church is "*communio et mission* - communion and mission, communion for mission,"[932] thus orienting its

[929] Cf. Felix Wilfred, "*Ecclesia in Asia* and the Challenges of Evangelization."

[930] See the interview with Nicholas Somchai in Peter C. Phan, ed., *The Future of the Asian Churches*, 39.

[931] Thomas Han Hong-Soon, "Synod for Asia, A Time of Grace," in *The Future of the Asian Churches*, ed. Phan, 38.

[932] Cardinal Jozef Tomko, "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service," in FABC Papers, no. 95, 4. See also Cardinal Jozef Tomko, "The Church in Asia at the Service of Life in Jesus Christ," *Indian Missiological Review* (1997): 30-38.

reflections and hopes of reaping a "great harvest of faith" in this vast and vital continent.[933]

Pope St. John Paul II reminded the assembly during his homily at the concluding Mass, that "Jesus Christ was born in Asia and he sowed in this continent the seed of salvation for all peoples of the world. This eternal 'seed' cannot but bear abundant fruit if taken care of in a proper way."[934] Since there are a variety of pastoral situations in this continent, the Exhortation also encourages a variety of methods to be employed to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. Besides suggesting that a pedagogy should be followed to introduce people step by step to the person and the mystery of Jesus Christ, it also recommends that a subsequent catechesis should be followed by an "evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching" (EA 20). The positive encouragement, that the Church in Asia has to make serious efforts and "continue to pursue the task of becoming more *Asian*, relentlessly, courageously, creatively"[935] so that "contemplating Jesus in his human nature, the peoples of Asia find their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfiled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered" (EA 14), was indeed gladly received. In the coming years the Church in Asia has to realise two significant elements: inland mission of converting the Church of Jesus Christ as God's holy people, and enabling people to experience abundant life in Jesus the Saviour. This serves as both a reminder and a challenge to the Asian Church.

Addressing the religious and cultural realities in the Asian continent, the Exhortation places on record what is very much true and strongly witnessed among the people of India: the religious and cultural values, love of silence and contemplation, simplicity and harmony, non-violence and respect for life, spirit of hard work and closeness to nature, discipline and thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry, and, especially, its spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence (EA 6). Thousands of people from different walks of life appreciate these values and visit Asia, especially India, to experience these religious and cultural realities. In such a framework of complementarity and harmony, the Exhortation positively hopes that the Church in Asia can communicate the Gospel in a

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[933] Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), Manila (15 January 1995), 11.

[934] Thomas Han Hong-Soon, "Synod for Asia, A Time of Grace," 38.

[935] Peter C. Phan, "Challenge for Asian Christianity," in *The Future of the Asian Churches*, 91.

faithful and effective manner. It reminds that the gift of faith in Jesus Christ is to be internalised and is to be shared especially by all those who have received this pure gift from God. This, in turn, will encourage the bishops, pastors, and missionaries to be strong and convincing in their confession of faith in Jesus Christ, the unique and universal Saviour of humankind. Jesus Christ remains the Good News for the men and women of every time and place.

James Kroeger maintains that *Ecclesia in Asia* concluded, as it had begun, "on a clear note of optimism and gratitude." The Church in Asia accepted this Exhortation as the Holy Father's gift. Its contents are, without doubt, "a mixture of the old and the new, a summation of Asian reflection and insights in the Vatican II era, a presentation of the mission agenda for Asia's faith-communities, and a program for evangelization in the new millennium."[936] The real challenge now is the renewal of the Church, making it relevant especially to young people, and engagement in true dialogue with different cultures and other religions. It could be said that *Ecclesia in Asia* came at the right time and hence is a much valuable gift.

Concluding Remarks

This part of the chapter has tried to clearly define and defend the uniqueness of Jesus Christ using the magisterial teachings as guiding principles. Jesus Christ is unique because one cannot explain the great mystery of his incarnation as something natural, and his life, his healing ministry, and finally his death and resurrection are nique events in the history of the world. Kasper has tried to explain and defend this substantial union of God and man in Jesus Christ and the absoluteness of Christ as the essential contents of Christian revelation. Christianity is also unique because it stems from the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, its founder. An authentic Christian gives witness to these revealed truths in his personal life, which members of other religions might not readily accept. The section has also attempted to trace Christianity and its development in the Asian/Indian scenario, especially in the multi-religious context, as reflected in *Ecclesia in Asia*. Although proclaiming Jesus Christ as the unique and universal Saviour of the world, in a multi-lingual and religious pluralistic scenario like India, is challenging, conscious and constant efforts are being made by the churches in Asia/India to attain this end.

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[936] James H. Kroeger, "Continuing Pentecost in Asia," 78.

PART II: CHRISTOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INDIAN SCENARIO

Introduction:

Having provided a detailed articulation of the Vatican Documents and others related to the theme concerned – the uniqueness and universal salvation in Jesus Christ - and trying to have a clear picture of the propositions and the position of the Magisterial teachings, what now follows is a brief description of the situation of Christology in India. This will give a broader picture of the gradual development of Christianity in India amidst different religious traditions, especially those indigenous to the country. Later, the christological reflections of Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred analysed in this part will facilitate a clear idea of the methodology and style of theologising in India.

4.2 Christology in India and the Hindu Philosophical Structure

At the very outset, it should be acknowledged that India has been influenced, even sometimes dominated by Western approaches and thinking, especially in christological formulations and expressions. Although the existence of the Church according to history and Christian tradition goes back to the first century, India has not succeeded in producing a so-called Christology of its own. History teaches that the christological issues discussed in the West were transferred in their original form into Indian religious setting. However the theological scene changed gradually in the nineteenth century, when attempts were made to define an indigenous theology. Some important Indian thinkers, especially theologians, sensed and argued that christological articulations formulated outside of India were ineffective and seemingly irrelevant. Hence, with the purpose of making Christ more tangible, meaningful and relevant, attempts for a Christology in the Indian context began, using Indian culture, its way of life and thought-forms.[937]

Jesus Christ, no doubt, belongs to Asia but until now has remained largely unknown to the people of the continent (EA 2), to its Asian inhabitants. It is apt, therefore, to review

[937] Cf. Hubert Manohar Watson, *Towards a Relevant Christology in India Today: An Appraisal of the Christologies of John Hick, Jürgen Moltmann and Jon Sobrino* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 52.

how Indian Christian scholars and theologians have tried to re-interpret Western christological articulations in Indian context using Hindu philosophical structures.

4.2.1 Christological Developments before the Twentieth Century

In spite of the existence of the Christian community in Asia from the very first century, there were hardly any attempts to interpret Christian faith in relation to the Indian context until the early seventeenth century. The first attempt occurred with the arrival of an Italian Jesuit missionary, Robert De Nobili, in 1605, who was rather confident and even convinced that Indian philosophy and its philosophical language could be used as a means of conveying Christian truth. He studied and adopted the Hindu customs and traditions, translated Christian theological vocabulary into local languages (Sanskrit and Tamil), and thereby contributed to the formation of Indian Christology.[938] His attempt was followed by the Protestants, beginning with the work of the Lutheran missionaries who ventured not only to translate Christian Scripture but also Western theology.

Gradually, Indian Hindu thinkers and philosophers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886), Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), to name but a few, attempted to interpret Christology, either through the influence of liberal education in the West or through the Christian religion. Hence, their efforts were to a large extent, not a faith-response to Christ, since they endeavoured to incorporate the Christian doctrines into the Hindu thought-framework.[939]

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, founder of *Brahma Samaj*, a society whose goal was to reform Hinduism, was attracted by Jesus' ethics. He personally found the doctrine of Christ more conducive to moral principles and more adaptable for the use of rational beings.[940] Christ

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[938] Robin H. S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1989), 11-14; Cf. also P. T. Thomas, "Robert De Nobili," *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers* (Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 1998), 13-19.

[939] For further reading see Watson, *Towards a Relevant Christology in India Today*, 52-58. For individual Indian Hindu thinkers mentioned above see, Raja Ram Mohon Roy, *Second Appeal* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1821), 12-110; Nalini Devadas, *Sri Ramakrishna* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1965), 26; P. C. Mazoomdar, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1955), 283-287; Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: India Advaita Ashram, 1996-1999); Mahatma Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ* (Bombay: Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960).

[940] Cf. John Nicol Farquhar, *The Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York: Macmillan, 2009), 29-73.

was, for him, a great teacher and a messenger of God, but he rejected Jesus' total divinity. The title of Jesus as the Son of God was accepted by him, since he considered this honour as God's gift and not something that was innate to Jesus. He even rejected the christological two-natured doctrine, arguing, that this was an opposition between divinity and matter. Even the passion and death of Jesus was not accepted by him but, however, he admitted that human salvation lay in following the teachings of Jesus, through repentance.[941]

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was regarded by the Hindus as an incarnation of God.[942] He understood Jesus within his theory of the equality of all religions. He approached Christianity as *sadhana* (practise), as one aspect of *bhaktimarga* (way of devotion)[943] and his central concept was God-realisation, *anubhava* (experience). He encountered Jesus through the Bible although he never showed any interest in the dogmas of the Church, but claimed to have had a personal experience of seeing Christ.[944] According to him, Christianity was one of the paths leading to God-realisation and Christ was one among many, who led people to this realisation, thereby accepting Jesus as one of the incarnations of God.[945]

Swami Vivekananda, a Western-educated Hindu thinker, was the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, which promoted harmony among religions. He proposed a unity of all religions although unity, according to him, did not mean merging of all religions into a single entity. He said, "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet perceive his individuality and grow according to his law of growth."[946] Vivekananda acknowledged Jesus as an Oriental and also called him a *yogi* (someone who had already achieved a high level of spiritual insight), who renounced everything and showed others the path for such spiritual realisation. Unlike Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda

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[941] Roy, *Second Appeal*, 12-110.

[942] Cf. Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, I: 3 and 8.

[943] See Devadas, *Sri Ramakrishna*, 26.

[944] Cf. Swami Nikhilananda, trans., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1942), 34.

[945] See Haridas Battacharya, ed., *Cultural Heritage of India* (Culcutta: Belur Math, 1964), II: 494-520.

[946] Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, I: 24.

preferred a mystic Christ to an ethical Christ.[947] He criticised Christianity's over-emphasis on the historical Jesus, because he refused to accept a religion that advocated human salvation fabricated on a historical person. The significance of Jesus, to him, was that he showed humanity the way to become perfect.[948]

Mahatma Gandhi's understanding of Christ was certainly not from a philosophical perspective, but rather arose from a practical basis. The significance of Christ, for him, lay in the ethics of love, which he termed *ahimsa* (non-violence). He was indebted to Jesus' teachings, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and for his exemplary life and death. However, he believed that all religions had the common goal of promoting an ethic of love.[949] Gandhi considered the historical Jesus insignificant but, however, highly regarded the principles expounded by him. A world depending on a God who died 2000 years ago could provide little comfort, according to Gandhi. What was important for him was the contemporary realisation of what Jesus stood for in his own personal life, and not the preaching of the historical Jesus.[950]

In addition to the four scholars discussed above, there emerged also others who tried to interpret the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ. Although all these thinkers acknowledged the life and teachings of Jesus, they however did not accept his role as the only saviour of the world. And in the middle of the twentieth century, Indian Christian theologians such as Aiyadurai Jesudasen Appasamy (1891-1975), Pandipeddi Chenchiah (1886-1959), Vengal Chakkarai (1880-1958) among many others made significant contributions, but however, in the framework and understanding of Hindu religion.[951]

4.2.2 Contemporary Christological Discussions

Up to the middle of twentieth century, Indian thinkers, to a great extent, interpreted the significance of Jesus Christ especially in relation to Hindu philosophical systems and concepts. Gradually the approach changed and, at the present time, Christology proceeds

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[947] Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, VII: 1-2.

[948] Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, VII: 1-4 and 20-27.

[949] Cf. Watson, *Towards a Relevant Christology in India Today*, 57.

[950] Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, 34.

[951] For detailed explanation regarding the contribution of individual thinkers see Watson, *Towards a Relevant Christology in India Today*, 58-66.

with greater independence from the philosophical systems and Hindu-thought framework, due to the attempts of Raimundo Panikkar, Michael Amaladoss, Felix Wilfred, Stanley Samartha, Doraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass, George Soares-Prabhu, and many others. These theologians struggled valiantly to reconcile God's universal salvific will and his revelation in Jesus Christ in the Indian context, characterised by poverty, religious and cultural plurality, and caste system. The discussions that now follow are limited only to Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred who have made substantial contributions to theology, and especially to Christology, in India.

4.2.2.1 Michael Amaladoss

Among the prominent Indian theologians, Michael Amaladoss occupies a significant and unique reputation, as one who drew support from social sciences for his theological ventures. A careful analysis of his theological thinking makes it clear that anthropological and social sciences have a significant bearing upon various areas of his theological enterprise such as liturgy, inter-religious dialogue, inculturation, liberation and evangelisation, to name but a few. Added to this, his stay in Rome as the Assistant Superior General of the Jesuits favoured him with the opportunity for dialogue and interaction with Western theological trends, which he later assessed and integrated in his writings.[952]

It is commonly agreed that Amaladoss is one of the pioneers in Indian theologising. His theological vision somehow provokes one to rethink the traditional approaches to non-Christian religions, the mystery of Christ, evangelisation and more. It is no wonder, therefore, that some of his views have become controversial. It is certain, however, that Amaladoss dares to advocate a paradigm shift, where all that is believed in "will be re-discovered in a new unity and new relationships."[953]

Amaladoss' theology is more theocentric and mission-oriented than Christocentric. He questions whether it is still meaningful to affirm that Jesus Christ is the only saviour. In the light of other religions that also facilitate salvific divine-human encounter, "the

[952] Cf. Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 1.

[953] Felix Wilfred, *Beyond the Settled Foundations* (Trichy: Department of Christian Studies, 1993), 137.

affirmation that Jesus Christ is the only saviour," for Amaladoss "is no longer tenable."[954] The scriptural affirmations regarding the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as saviour, Amaladoss contends, need to be reinterpreted in the light of the experiences of other religions, since these affirmations were made in a Jewish Christian context.

Amaladoss holds that God is the only saviour because only God can save.[955] It is always God who saves, not religions and hence, "people may be saved *in* and *through* a religion, but not *by* it."[956] He strongly affirms that religions are but mediations that do not substitute for, but only make present, God's saving love. Hence, "salvation is a mysterious process of God's continuing action in the world reaching out to the humans."[957] God is not a God of a particular people and hence, his actions are not limited to a particular historical and cultural tradition.

An issue at the top of the theological agenda of the Church has been the role of other religions in salvation in the context of the Christian affirmation that Jesus is the Saviour of all humans. Amaladoss draws attention to *Redemptoris Missio* which emphasises clearly the presence of the Holy Spirit not only in men of good will but also in society and history, in peoples, in cultures, in religions, and always with reference to Christ (RM 28, 29). The universal action of the Spirit cannot be separated from or confused with the specific, particular action that operates in the body of Christ, the Church. Hence, "the distinction between the two ways of the Holy Spirit's acting cannot lead us to separate them as if only the first were related to the salvific mystery of Christ."[958]

Amaladoss, alluding to various Church documents, argues strongly for the positive elements and positive role of other religious traditions in the economy of God's design of salvation. In dialogue with other great religious traditions, "we accept them as significant

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[954] Michael Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," *The Japan Mission Journal* 55 (2001): 219.

[955] Amaladoss argues here that the apostles encountered the human Jesus. As they become aware of his salvific power they discover God's own power present in him. Thus he logically concludes that only God can save. God is present and active in Jesus, but he is also present and active through other saviour figures in other religions.

[956] Michael Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," *VJTR* 53, no. 8 (1989): 408.

[957] Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 219-220.

[958] Michael Amaladoss, "Other Religions and the Salvific Mystery of Christ," *VJTR* 70, no. 1 (2006): 9. See also RM 81-82.

and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation."[959] This positive appreciation is based on the fruits of the Spirit perceived in the lives of believers in other religions. "The positive appreciation is further rooted in the conviction of faith that God's plan of salvation for humanity is one and reaches out to all peoples."[960] Therefore Amaladoss maintains that "other religions too have a role of participatory mediation, though always in relationship to Christ's own mediation, and that of the Church."[961] Here, Amaladoss quotes Pope St. John Paul II: "Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his."[962]

Further, Amaladoss tries to explain salvation by using the term *Advaita*, an Indian school of philosophy. He maintains:

> *A-dvaita* means not-two. The Absolute (God) and the universe are not-two. It does not say that they are 'one.' It seeks to avoid both monism/pantheism and dualism. It denies an exclusive focus either on the One or the Many. It affirms an inner differentiation and relationship… The human person is an advaitic union of the spirit and the body.[963]

Amaladoss puts forward the spirit-body analogy and tries to explain the mystery of salvation as *advaitic*.[964] Similarly he argues, that humans are not totally outside God and independent of God, but there exists a mystery of *advaita* between the divine and the human. That is the reason why Amaladoss considers the incarnate Word the model of *advaitic* mystery. Taking the incarnation of Jesus as the foundation for *advaitic* unity,

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[959] This was said in the first General Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Taipei, 1974. The Asian Bishops recognised and respected profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values in the great religious traditions.

[960] The Theological Advisory Committee of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences published a set of Theses on Interreligious Dialogue in 1987. Thesis 2 accepted religions as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation.

[961] Amaladoss, "Other Religions and the Salvific Mystery of Christ," 15.

[962] *Redemptoris Missio*, 5. See also *Dominus Iesus*, 14 which refers back to *Gaudium et Spes*, 45.

[963] Michael Amaladoss, "Theosis and Advaita: An Indian Approach to Salvation," *VJTR* 75, no. 12 (2011): 896-897.

[964] In explaining the principle of advaita, Amaladoss makes use of the physical constitution of a human person, who has both, a spirit and a body or rather, a spirit in the body. The spirit has a certain priority because it can act alone and it can also act with the body. The body, however, is dependent on the spirit because it is nothing by itself. The spirit and the body are neither two beings nor one entity. Here Amaladoss makes clear that there is a unity and also a duality in this unity. The human person therefore, is an advaitic union of the spirit and the body.

Amaladoss develops the concept of unity among humanity. The principle of *advaitic* unity God, in and through Jesus Christ, also unites humanity advaitically with one another and the cosmos. Hence, salvation becomes a mystery of *cosmotheandric* communion, in the words of Raimon Panikkar,[965] but Amaladoss envisages it as cosmic dance.[966]

God's ways of self-manifestation and action in the world are unique. The way of Jesus is certainly special and Christians believe that God has manifested himself through the incarnate Word, which has a special place and role in history. But Amaladoss argues that this speciality of Jesus Christ does not and should not exclude and replace other ways. Finally, he concludes, Jesus, in so far as he is divine, is the only saviour, because, as mentioned earlier, only God can save.[967]

Speaking on the universality of Christ and salvation in him, Amaladoss starts with a basic proposition: "Jesus is the Christ, but Christ is not only Jesus."[968] He presents the composite image of Jesus. Jesus is "divine and human. His divine nature is eternal. He becomes human in time. The humanity is totally dependent on the divinity, while the divinity can act alone… The unity between the divinity and humanity is not to deny the double principle of action."[969] The Jesus of history is limited by his humanity, culture and history. It is in this Jesus that the action of God, Father, Son and Spirit, becomes manifest. He will reach his fullness only on the last day when all things will be reconciled. Hence, it is important that the universality of Christ takes into account the whole of cosmos, without limiting itself to his action in his incarnate form.

The two natures in Jesus cannot be separated but the relationship between the two is understood not by universalising the particularity of Jesus. One can say, therefore, that the actions of Jesus acquire a universal significance in so far as he is divine.[970] Amaladoss agrees with Kasper when he affirms that this universal significance cannot be fully

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[965] Cf. Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010).

[966] See Michael Amaladoss, *The Dancing Cosmos* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash: 2003); idem, "Images of Jesus in India," *EAPR* 31, nos. 1 and 2 (1994): 16-17.

[967]Cf. Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 224-225.

[968] Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 411. See also Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture* (London, SCM, 1987), 2-3; Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 290.

[969] Amaladoss, "Theosis and Advaita," 897.

[970] Cf. Gerald O' Collins, *Interpreting Jesus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 167.

understood if we do not place it in the context of the universal action of the Word.[971] The universal action of Christ cannot be localised at a point of time in history because, according to Amaladoss, "it will not be complete till the last day, when Christ will be all in all. The universality of Christ, therefore, includes all the manifestations of God in history." Although "Christians see a special, even unique, place and role in this history for God's action in Jesus we cannot simply universalize this."[972] Since according to Amaladoss, the mystery of Christ includes all the other manifestations of God in history, he argues that, one cannot reduce God's manifestations just to the one in Jesus.

Catholics believe and affirm with the Church that Jesus Christ is the universal Saviour of the world.[973] Amaladoss finds it very difficult to explain this affirmation in the light of the growing positive appreciation of other religions, especially in Asia.[974] He also rejects declarations that seem to assert that there are many saviours, and also that the one divine salvific mystery is known by many names, including Jesus. Amaladoss clearly affirms that all salvation is from God, in and through Jesus Christ.[975] This may be understood in either of the following two ways.

Christians appropriate salvation through their direct and conscious relationship in Jesus Christ. They are moved in faith by the Holy Spirit and the same Spirit also enables other people to accept or appropriate the 'salvation-in-Christ.' However, Amaladoss argues that the Spirit works in adherents of other faiths, neither through the kerygma and sacraments of the Church, nor through an explicit confession of faith in Jesus Christ (as in Christians), but is often facilitated by other symbolic figures and structures. This is what Pope St. John Paul II referred to as 'participated mediations.'[976]

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[971] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 188-189.

[972] Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 411-412.

[973] Amaladoss, while speaking about presenting Jesus to the people of Asia, alludes to the difficulties faced by the Asian bishops in presenting Jesus as the 'only Saviour' in the Asian context. This exclusive term is seen as an obstacle to those who are seriously searching for truth and use of such term is perceived as arrogance or disrespect of their own religious traditions. Jesus must be presented in the same way as he presented himself in his own earthly mission. Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Proclaiming Jesus Christ: Reflections on *Ecclesia in Asia*," *VJTR* 64, no. 7 (2000): 542.

[974] For more ideas, read the entire article of Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 219-226. He tries to expound the seriousness of this issue and assert that God is the Saviour of the world.

[975] Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religion," 328.

[976] For more on 'Participated Mediations,' see the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* of Pope St. John Paul II. Amaladoss maintains that in no way can these symbolic figures be equated with Jesus Christ or be considered parallel mediators. But a pluralism of (participated but real) mediations has to be acknowledged.

Secondly, "Jesus Christ's salvific act was 'once-for-all.' But this once-for-all character does not limit it to one particular moment in time, but covers the whole eschatological time in a dynamic of 'already-not yet' (cf. 1 Jn 13-17; 1 Cor 15:12-28; Eph 1:3-10)."[977] It is this 'already-not yet' historical dynamic that makes space for other religions. Amaladoss argues that the once-for-all, i.e., 'already', character of the paschal mystery is not an obstacle to a positive role for other religions in God's plan for universal salvation because it always goes together with the 'not-yet'. Based on this, Amaladoss finds it no obstacle to give other religions a certain positive role in God's plan of salvation. It is clear to him that Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is active also in other religions. Though these might not consciously and directly relate to Jesus Christ, this however, is no reason to deny the uniqueness and the universality of the salvific mystery of God. Therefore Amaladoss opines that it is the same salvific mystery of Jesus Christ that is operative among people in different ways.[978]

An interesting question that Amaladoss seeks to answer is: how is it possible that what happened to Jesus, at a particular place and time, becomes salvifically significant to everyone at every time, even to the entire cosmos? He suggests two alternatives. Firstly, he posits the language of merit, whereby Jesus through his salvific death has gained infinite merit, which is now distributed to everyone who behaves according to his/her conscience with implicit or explicit faith in Christ. The second answer is more transcendental. In becoming human, Jesus is somehow uniting himself with the sinful humanity, and what happens in him affects everyone. Hence in Christ, all are reconciled and redeemed.[979] In Jesus, humans experience God's presence and action in the world in a new and unique way and Amaladoss asserts that "this presence is not dominating and powerful, destructive of other presences of God through the Spirit in the movements of committed people who seek God and God's liberation and fullness for themselves and for the world."[980]

And further, acknowledging this pluralism does not in any way mean the denial of the uniqueness of the source or Christian faith affirmations and the deed that God has done in Jesus Christ.

[977] Amaladoss, "Other Religions and the Salvific Mystery of Christ," 19.

[978] Through the affirmation of this diversity of ways, Amaladoss tries to tell that we are not talking about Jesus and other ways aside of Jesus. We are talking about different ways in which Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, is reaching out to people: some acknowledge Jesus as the saviour; others do not relate to him in the same conscious way.

[979] Among others, the transcendental theory is attributed to Karl Rahner. Cf. *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 212-228. See also John Paul II's very first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 22.

[980] Michael Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say That I Am?" *VJTR* 60, no. 12 (1996): 794.

Finally, Christ for Amaladoss is the cosmic mystery, the Word, whose salvific power reaches out to all human beings in ways unknown to us (GS, 22). The incarnation and the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection are the historical concretisation of God's saving action and hence Amaladoss asserts, "that one can encounter Christ also outside the visible Christian community."[981] For Amaladoss, one thing is certain: encountering Jesus is experiencing God's salvific action in oneself. He clearly maintains, "Salvation is a Trinitarian action in which Father, Son and Spirit have their roles (EA 12)… One can say that the attributes like uniqueness and universality are given to Jesus precisely in so far as he is divine… The uniqueness of Jesus as Saviour depends on the fact that he is God. It is equivalent to saying that God is the unique Saviour, because the Father and the Spirit too are involved in the act of salvation."[982] Amaladoss maintains that the universal salvific plan of God implies a gathering, reconciliation, and a unification of all, not only of all peoples but also of all created things and this plan of God is revealed and realised through a variety of symbolic mediations. Hence, Amaladoss believes that "the various religions, and even secular movements, are at the service of this plan of God for the world."[983]

Inter-religious dialogue and mission are the main thrusts of Amaladoss' theological project, as seen in the Indian scenario, where religious pluralism and poverty are two dominant factors. Inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, mission and liberation would be mutually isolated, if they did not influence and involve each other and lead ultimately to a holistic liberation of the human person-in-community. This holistic liberation of the human person-in-community should be characterised as the reign of God rather than of the Church.[984] To convert this vision of the kingdom into praxis, and particularly in the Indian context "where there is discrimination and conflict among people on the basis of creed, language, ethnic origins and religion, Amaladoss envisions that the local church plays a mediating and facilitating role in bringing everyone together."[985] He clearly states that evangelisation and proclamation cannot be a one-sided activity on the part of the Church. Proclamation has to take place in the context of inter-religious dialogue

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[981] Amaladoss, "Images of Jesus in India," 11-12.

[982] Michael Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," *EAPR* 37, no. 3 (2000): 237-238.

[983] Michael Amaladoss, *Faith, Culture and Inter-religious Dialogue* (Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1985), 7.

[984] A. D' Souza, "Michael Amaladoss," in *Indian Christian Thinkers*, ed. Anand Amaladass (Chennai: Satya Nilayam Publications, 2005), 8.

[985] Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 9.

assuming, more and more, the form of witnessing.[986] The Church itself should become a witnessing community to the experience and action of God and she needs to open frontiers and dialogue with everyone.

Amaladoss understands dialogue as tolerance and respect towards other religions and different cultures. The Eucharist, for him, plays a predominant role since he sees in it a strong, uniting, and unifying factor. To be around the Altar of the Lord for the Eucharist does not mean that one is away from other cultures and religious elements. Eucharist is a bond that unites people, and Christianity, which celebrates the Eucharist, has a very special role to play as a unifying factor. Amaladoss explains:

> Opting for the poor, it must prophetically confront the unjust oppressor. In humility it has to be sensitive to the mystery of the action of God in the world. It should be open to the creative newness of the Spirit. Its horizon is God's own mission of universal reconciliation, when God will be God's people. Then God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).[987]

The objective of mission, for Amaladoss, is to promote dialogue between the Word of God and the human community to which the Word is addressed, as a call to conversion.[988] He aims at a cross-cultural mission which is the need of the hour and is God's plan for the world and the Church. "The goal of mission," according to Amaladoss, "is to exhort people, through word and example, especially those of Jesus, to turn to God and respond to God's mystery as they experience it in their own lives and in religious traditions."[989] The mission is not communication of a creed but sharing of our experience of God's action in Jesus. Amaladoss is emphatic in saying that the process of proclaiming Christ cannot be pre-planned and controlled from centre, but must be allowed to emerge from below, from struggles and questions of humanity on their journey through life.[990]

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[986] Michael Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?" *EAPR* 23, no. 1 (1986): 76-78.

[987] Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New: Mission in Dialogue* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), 284.

[988] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 1.

[989] Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 219.

[990] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be One?* (Delhi: Vidyajyothi and ISPCK, 1998), xv.

Religions, Amaladoss opines, are not related to one another in terms of superior and inferior, supernatural and natural, explicit and implicit. Nor are they mutually equal so that one can use any one of them. God leads people to himself in various ways in a mysterious manner known only to him. Religion, therefore, is a matter of God's call. He further asserts, "The world is not a supermarket of religions where one can shop around for the best one."[991] Religions are relative, symbolic expressions of the Absolute. He further adds,

> It is true that at the root of any authentic religious experience there is the same person, God. But to conclude from this that they are all the same experience is to ignore, on the one hand, the various ways in which God can manifest Himself and, on the other, the various cultural and symbolic ways in which the human person lives such an experience.[992]

Finally, what is the task of Asian Christians? According to Amaladoss, they need to explore the meaning of Jesus Christ in the context of the Asian experience and pluralism of religions. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ should not be confused and associated with the uniqueness of the Church, though he feels that *Ecclesia in Asia* (no 20) indirectly makes a reference to it. He reiterates that "we are called to proclaim and witness to Jesus Christ, not to a Christology. We are expected to share an experience, not to repeat a creed. We are invited to recognise, respect and accept the rich experiences of God that others have in their religions before talking to them about our own experience of God in Jesus Christ."[993]

Critical Appraisal: The implications of Amaladoss' Christology could be summarised in five categories: affirmation of pluralism in the manner where others are respected as individuals, affirmation of relationship especially between God, fellow human beings and nature as a loving and sharing community, affirmation of history since God entered this world in a particular historical context, affirmation of identity and mission where one is

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[991] Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission," 62.

[992] Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 407. Explicating the concept of religion and its complexity, he further offers a few metaphors which help in understanding the peaceful existence of different religions. He uses metaphor life – growing organism, the opposite end of the spectrum, different rivers leading to the same ocean, different colours of the spectrum, different languages referring the same reality and the metaphor of community model. More on this see, Amaladoss, *Faith, Culture and Inter-Religious Dialogue*, 7.

[993] Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 240.

called to give witness to one's identity in the area of his/her mission and finally the affirmation of symbol of Jesus Christ as something unique and particular, though not exclusive.[994] However, in the light of the teachings of the Magisterium, the 'Contextual Christologizing' of Amaladoss raises many questions.

Amaladoss, in his theological endeavor, addresses a vast array of issues which are of crucial importance to Asian Christians. For him, no single group has a monopoly over the person and message of Christ, and given the context of religious pluralism, a narrow exclusivist approach to Christology will be counterproductive. In his efforts to develop a contextual Christology (Indian Christology), Amaladoss seems to be sometimes polemic in his arguments. He places prime importance on the need for authentic dialogue which, he believes, would enable authentic contextual Christology. He himself opts for a christological thought-pattern that is inclusivist-pluralist. However, one might feel disappointed that he does not address the relevant crucial issues like the uniqueness Jesus enjoys amidst other co-existing religions; neither does he suggest an ecclesiology suitable to the Indian socio-religious conditions.[995] He fails to discuss the relevance of Christianity in the context of religious pluralism. These core issues remain unanswered and are still open for further discussions and interpretation. Amaladoss admonishes all those involved in Contextual Christology, to look for fresh and clear insights, which would create new images in given Asian cultural-contexts, and to avoid traditional images of Jesus.

4.2.2.2 Felix Wilfred

Felix Wilfred is also considered one of India's most prominent theologians of the post-independent generation. He has the honour of being the first Indian theologian to have been appointed by the Pope to be the member of the International Theological Commission in the Vatican. He is known for his theologising from the perspective of the poor, and the marginalised. He considers the entire economic context in his theologising and hence his work represents contextual theology. His numerous writings clearly show that the guiding principle that underlines his theology is contextuality – the Asian context

[994] Cf. P. R. John, "Towards Indian Christology," in *Seeking New Horizons*, ed. Leonard Fernando (Delhi: Vidyajyothi Education and Welfare Society and ISPCK, 2002), 71.

[995] Cf. Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 10.

and more specifically, the Indian context.[996] Wilfred tries to analyse the multi-religious Indian context and establishes that Christianity, at its origin, has Asian roots. His writings support the belief that God is always with the poor and the needy.

Wilfred argues that theology should dialogue with other theologies and include them at its core or else such a theology would amount to certain deficiency. He discovered two main strands of theology in India: the first has "spiritual quest and God-realisation as its focus" (generally called *Ashram* experience), and the second is "that of the liberationists, concerned with the struggle of the people and the historical involvement for their liberation."[997]

In addition to these two main strands of theology, Wilfred discovered two strands of tradition and religiosity in India: the 'great tradition,' also referred to as Sanskrit tradition, represented by higher-caste Hindus (especially the *Brahmins*), and the 'little tradition' the non-Sanskrit, represented by the powerless and the oppressed. It is in this context of the 'little tradition' that Wilfred sees God's self-disclosure most authentically in the poor. The poor are, for him, 'sites of God's visitation.'[998]

God, for Wilfred, is the source of power and he lets this power be experienced in the underlying hope of the poor and their struggles. Therefore, Wilfred maintains, that he Asian Church has two choices: either to opt to be on the side of God and consequently, among the Asian poor, or to be on the side of the mighty in the world – the upper classes, upper castes, rich etc. Wilfred is certain and assures that the Church, by opting for the poor, might lose the privileges it enjoys, but it will retain its godly power.[999] He clearly observes that when the poor turn towards the Church with the hope that the tremendous potential of the Gospel will revolutionise the existing social order in favour of the powerless, the Church, in most parts of Asia, has given the impression of being on the side of the upper castes and classes.[1000]

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[996] Cf. Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 563.

[997] Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 564.

[998] Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East? Asian Challenges and Christian Involvement* (Trichy: The University of Madras, 1991), 178.

[999] Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?* 112-113.

[1000] Cf. Felix Wilfred, „Der Befreiungsprozess in Indien und die Teilnahme der Kirche," in *Verlass den Tempel: Antyodaya – indischer Weg zur Befreiung*, ed. Felix Wilfred (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 179-208.

Wilfred argues that Jesus is relevant to Asia not because the vast majority of the Asian masses are non-Christians, but because they are poor. Jesus' message has a direct bearing upon their life-style. Jesus is central for Asia because his spirit, his life, is catholic, universal, and open to all peoples. His message of the Kingdom of God is the expression of the universality that his person embodied.[1001] Keeping both, poverty and religious pluralism in mind, Wilfred declares firmly, that the option for the poor on the part of the Church is to be carried on in a pluralistic situation. In doing so, he sees an emerging pluralistic and inter-religious option for the poor and the opening up of fresh horizons for Asian Church.[1002]

He identifies as false the belief and conception of Christians, that because they are Christians and they proclaim Jesus Christ (through their categories), Jesus is also experienced by non-Christians with whom Christians interact. This is purely a misconception because, according to Wilfred, "Jesus Christ is not encapsulated within the world of our interpretative categories,"[1003] and the mystery of Jesus Christ cannot be reduced to our mental categories. In the Indian context, mediation could take place in our neighbours, those with whom we share experiences, through an inner illumination or revelation. Therefore, the insights and intuition of our neighbours concerning Jesus and his mysteries are from their life-experiences, and are not just academic formulations. Hence, it is absolutely inappropriate to affirm that others experience Jesus Christ, only through what Christian community teaches about Christ and the Gospel.

Engaging himself with the issue of Christology and religious pluralism, Wilfred poses these questions: Can Jesus Christ be interpreted in such a way that people who have been sustained by their religious traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.), do not need to break their spiritual journey to encounter Jesus Christ? Can they meet him on their spiritual journey and interpret him as they experience him? Such an approach, according to Wilfred, would lead "to a new realisation of the journey already made and project the path yet to be traversed."[1004] He emphasises that any approach to the "mystery of Jesus

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[1001] Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil: Contextual Reinterpretation of Christianity* (Trichy: The University of Madras, 1995), 165.

[1002] Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?* 116.

[1003] Felix Wilfred, "Jesus-Interpretations in Asia: Fragmentary Reflections on Fragments," *EAPR* 43, no. 4 (2006): 341.

[1004] Felix Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism: Some Reflections," *CONC* 3 (2008): 86.

Christ in a religiously pluralist context" needs to abandon "the ontological moorings,"[1005] because the best defence of Christian theology, and especially of Christology, clearly lies outside the bounds of metaphysics. And there is no single Christology that can ever claim to be whole and complete. All Christologies, according to Wilfred, are partial and fragmentary.[1006]

Essential questions have been posed by leading thinkers and seekers of truth such as, how other religions are related to Jesus Christ and how Christ is related to other religious traditions? Wilfred responds to this question from an experiential point of view, with reference to peoples of other religious traditions, and not merely from a theoretical perspective. Therefore, it is more important for Christians, to know how people of other faiths have approached, understood and experienced Jesus Christ and his message in their spiritual journey,[1007] rather than to question how Jesus Christ is present in other religious traditions.

Addressing the issue of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, Wilfred maintains that Indian interpretations are neither "peripheral" nor just "so-called 'cultural adaptations' of a ready-made Christology."[1008] He asserts that India's experience of Jesus and its interpretations of him are exclusively for India, and they are no appendage to any one particular Christology. He affirms that such Indian experiences and interpretations of Jesus do not require the language of uniqueness.[1009] The issue of uniqueness, Wilfred feels, may not be so important for the Indians. It is rather, a highly significant issue for the Christianity of the West because of the transition from its position of isolation to a general awareness of other religious traditions, their ideals, mediators, etc.[1010]

Attempting to construct an Indian Christology with special focus on suffering and poverty will make Indians realise that this is indeed possible without having recourse to the

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[1005] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 87.

[1006] Felix Wilfred, *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 189f.

[1007] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 87.

[1008] Felix Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," *VJTR* 57, no. 11 (1993): 667.

[1009] Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 667.

[1010] Cf. Wilfred, "Jesus-Interpretations in Asia," 335-336; idem, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 672. Wilfred opines that the debate concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is mainly a debate among two Western fractions – the dogmatists and the reactionary liberals who try to relativised the claim of uniqueness.

language of uniqueness. The focus here is to encounter the person of Jesus Christ, so that an appropriate Indian Christology emerges out of such an encounter. Within the frame of an Indian interpretation, the mystery of Jesus Christ may be understood without recourse to the language of uniqueness, unique mediation, etc. In other words, what Wilfred wishes is that "India needs to explore a Christology which can have validity in its own right"[1011] (and not a Christology that calls for the language of uniqueness).

The challenge of pluralism has been another critical issue in the Indian scenario. Pluralism, generally speaking, is an attitude or way of life through which we acknowledge the independence of members of other cultural and minority groups to practise and maintain the cultural traditions of the groups to which they belong. Genuine pluralism calls for the decentralisation of power, wealth, ideology, etc. Human beings aim at power, and the language of power is today the common, legitimate language. Wilfred however wants to makes clear, that God is not a partner of this language, rather God speaks in the language of diversity. The Spirit of God is the source of differences, many tongues, but it is also the basis for creative communion and mutuality (Acts 2:1-11).[1012] One of the questions arising from this gift of difference, gift of tongues would be: how can we, today, creatively relate to the various religious expressions – gods, goddesses, rituals, etc. – of the popular religions of our non-Christian brethern?[1013] To Wilfred this appears to be a very important and central question of interreligious dialogue, and therefore of Asian theologising.

Based on this study, it may be concluded that "plurality is the language of the poor and that of God. Poor persons love plurality because they find in it a place for themselves. More important still, they find themselves acknowledged and affirmed… God is on the side of the victims and, therefore, He shares with them the language of difference, and He is most at home with difference."[1014] This leads Wilfred to conclude that because God is on the side of the poor, all persons who stand with them are indeed with God. Men and women, who stand on the side of the underprivileged, are extensions of the arms of God.

[1011] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 669.

[1012] Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?* 20, 274.

[1013] Felix Wilfred, "Popular Religions and Asian Contextual Theologizing," in *Popular Religion, Liberation and Contextual Theology*, ed. Jacques van Niewenhove and Berma Klein Goldewijik (Kampen: Kok 1991), 152.

[1014] Illathuparampil, *The Contemporary Theologians*, 566.

Wilfred sees the need for a re-interpretation of Christianity for the sake of the poor, and to enter into a deeper relationship with members of other faith. He believes that, a re-reading of the Scriptures from the mystical perspective will help Christianity to understand the non-Christian and their difficulties, based on their religious traditions in understanding Christianity.[1015] The relationship of the Church to the world has also to be renewed. This necessarily involves taking into account the past history as well as the present political character of cultural and ethnic identities.[1016] The Church also has to reiterate her options for the poor by contributing to a culture of solidarity and bringing in awarness regarding the problems of globalisation. Christian approach to Jesus' interpretation and understanding of the poor should be such that it opens up spaces for dalits and tribals, employing modes of expression other than conceptualising categories, titles, and epithets.[1017] Wilfred asserts, "The quintessence of the community of the disciples of Jesus is to be the embodiment, or rather the sacrament, of universal communion and solidarity."[1018]

The ultimate aim of evangelisation is nothing other than to acknowledge God's rule over human beings, the society and the world, and create an evironment of truth, love and freedom. Acknowledging that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), Christianity and the Church have to respond to the concrete human conditions on the Asian continent.[1019] Though every person is important, Wilfred opines that the Church in India should not concern itself primarily with individual conversion, but rather should be directed to the presentation of the gospel confronting the whole country, calling for conversion from its present state of oppression.[1020] Jesus was Good News to all, and especially to the poor of his time. Even today he is the Good News to millions throughout the world. Hence, "this human image of Jesus, born of a woman, God-made poor, God-with-us, teacher and prophet, healer, a person of harmony, suffering servant-leader, liberator, life-giver, is one that powerfully resonates with Asia's situation of servitude, with Asia's struggle towards justice and harmony – with our struggle for

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[1015] Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 240.

[1016] Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil*, 80.

[1017] Cf. Wilfred, "Jesus-Interpretations in Asia," 338-339.

[1018] Felix Wilfred, "Ecumenism as a Movement of Justice: Focus on Asia," *VJTR* 58, no. 9 (1994): 582.

[1019] Wilfred admits that the Church in India and her missiological engagements are associated with the concern of the poor and their struggles for liberation, especially that of the dalits.

[1020] Felix Wilfred, "Action Groups and the Struggle for Justice in India: Ecclesiological Implication," *The Ecumenical Review* 39 (1987): 291-309.

life."[1021] Wilfred reasonably questions if it is possible for a deep relationship to exist between Christians and neighbours of other faiths if Christians do not or fail to share and participate in some way in what non-Christians hold as most sacred? The faith of non-Christians, too, is more than just abstraction and is concretely lived out as loving devotion to the various deities.[1022]

Addressing the issue of salvation, Wilfred admits the "varying degrees of soteriological understanding of Jesus Christ in non-Christian Christologies, in as much as he makes present the power of divine salvation viewed in different ways but ultimately contributing to the fullness and integration of the life of the world and of the universe."[1023] The approach of the non-Christians to Jesus reveals a deep faith in him since these seekers try to encounter Jesus as part of their spiritual quest. This leads Wilfred to conclude that the plan of God, the mystery of the Word, of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit all have an inclusive character. He states clearly:

> It is not much the death of Jesus and the blood shed by him in the past that save, but rather it is the communion with him today, in his identity as crucified and resurrected (cf. Rom 8:43) and the following of his teachings and life-path that bring about salvation.[1024]

Jesus, his person, and his message have had a great impact on India. Wilfred agrees that the mission of Christ has been progressing imperceptibly but effectively, as millions are drawn towards the truth of his person. People let themselves be drawn by the splendour of the person of Christ and the beauty of his teaching, even as they remain in their own faith-experience. Such a mission, Wilfred maintains, does not require any support from the language of uniqueness.[1025]

[1021] Wilfred, "Jesus-Interpretations in Asia," 354. Cf. also FABC's Theological Advisory Commission Colloquium held in Pattaya, Thailand, 1994, especially article 35-36.

[1022] Wilfred, "Popular Religions and Asian Contextual Theologizing," 151.

[1023] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 88. Cf. also M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (Madras: CLS, 1979); Chaturvedi Badrinath, *Finding Jesus in Dharma* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000); Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989).

[1024] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 90.

[1025] Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 671.

Wilfred further maintains that theological efforts towards salvation imply progressive liberation from all that maims, corrodes, or negates life in any form.[1026] He believes that "if all people in their diversity of cultures, traditions and religious paths participate in the single salvation, they become partners in salvation and liberation. People of different religious traditions converge to experience and bear witness to the grace of God and to God's salvation."[1027] Therefore, Wilfred admits a close relationship between different religious traditions and also identifies them as partners in God's liberating project.

Critical Appraisal: Wilfred's entire aim is to reinterpret Christianity and the Christian faith in the Indian context, keeping in view the different types of sufferings and possibilities of freedom of human beings. To achieve this end, he proposes two types of dialogue: intra-traditional as well as inter-traditional. Furthermore, an Asian Jesus-interpretation, he believes, will avoid the erection of rigid boarders; instead, he maintains that a continuous movement beyond borders and boundaries is needed.[1028] Hence, the Church in India needs to explore a Christology which can have a validity of its own, a Christology which avoids the language of uniqueness.[1029] Wilfred calls upon Christianity, the Church, and the Christian communities to position themselves in such a way that they listen to God speaking in and through the struggles and experience of the suppressed and the oppressed, the least, and the last. This demands radical commitment to the cause of the poor and witness to the Gospel values. This, according to Wilfred, will make Jesus Christ and the Church more relevant to the Asian continent.

Finally, Wilfred seems to overemphasise that the followers of different faiths should mutually participate in each other's popular religious manifestations. This would lead, Wilfred believes, to the creation of true discipleship and community on the basis of what each one lives and holds most sacred. Wilfred fails to explain how Catholics, in such a mode of interaction, are to show prominence and reverence to their own spiritual traditions. Further, like Amaladoss, he too discourages the use of the language of

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[1026] Wilfred, while speaking of integral understanding of salvation means the well being of the whole person without any dichotomy of body and soul and the welfare of all without the distinction of caste, class, or creed.

[1027] Felix Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology: Public Theologizing," *Jeevadhara* XLIII, no. 253 (2013): 20.

[1028] Cf. Wilfred, "Jesus-Interpretations in Asia," 350.

[1029] Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 669.

uniqueness, thus failing to identify the significant importance given to Jesus by the Church and the Councils.

4.2.3 Christianity in the midst of Other Religions

Christianity, in general, is known for its peaceful co-existence with, and for the respect it has for other religious traditions. The Church in India seeks to engage in sincere dialogue with her followers and the religious values she teaches, and awaits her fulfilment in Jesus Christ (EA 6). She finds herself among people who display a deep and sincere yearning for God, and she is aware that this yearning can only be fully satisfied by Jesus Christ. The Church is convinced of this truth but faces constant difficulties in imparting this truth to adherents of other faiths. At present, important questions concerning the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ and salvation which comes only in and through Christ, are serious issues that have been constantly debated in India and are key concerns, especially when Christianity comes into dialogue with Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The crucial question at the heart of such dialogue is whether Jesus is one among many of the bearers of salvation, or is he the only one?

4.2.3.1 Christianity and Hinduism

It is important to note at the very outset that Christianity and Hinduism are religions which differentiate themselves from each other as eastern and western. If Christianity professes faith in one God (monotheism), Hinduism admits that it is pantheistic and has a vast collection of traditions and belief in different deities and divinities. Though there are many divisions and subdivisions in Hinduism, "all must agree that there is no fundamental doctrine that is exclusively the preserve of Hindus, such that belief in it will determine whether or not one is a Hindu."[1030]

A large number of Hindus acknowledge that there is an ultimate reality (*Brahman*) who, however, is worshipped in different forms by different schools of thought. The issue of Hindu divinity is quite complex since the same divinity takes many different forms,

[1030] Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, "Hindu Views of Jesus," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths: Leading Thinkers from Five Religions Reflect on His Meaning*, ed. Gregory A. Barker (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 81. See also Julius J. Lipner, "Ancient Banyan: An Inquiry into the Meaning of 'Hinduness,'" *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 109-126.

giving rise to gods and goddesses, and local divinities. The Hindus of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries view Jesus as a teacher and a symbol of the human made divine.[1031] They believe in the concept of incarnation, 'God-in-man' but not in human divinization, 'God-as-man.' Hence, in Hindu thinking, the Christian significance of Christ as the one who takes away the sins of humanity simply has no meaning or role. Atonement makes little sense in any Hindu cosmology, where there is no doctrine of original sin, but only of consequential actions. There is, indeed, the rich concept of self-sacrifice (offering oneself for others) but atonement as the end of self-sacrifice is absolutely unacceptable and meaningless in Hindu culture.[1032]

At the heart of the matter is the crucial question concerning the uniqueness and the universality of Jesus Christ and the controversial issue of God's role in salvation. Hindus generally agree that salvation is attained through good deeds and righteous living, by following '*dharma*' (eternal laws), avoiding sin, and thereby, breaking the cycle of rebirth. Salvation is not granted but attained through the path of knowledge (*jnana*), devotion (*bhakti*), and good deeds. Further, Hindus argue that "if there is a notion of redemption, then Jesus is a redeemer in the sense of being an ideal of self-sacrifice, love, and suffering, who, had he not lived, would not have enabled so many to gain their spiritual goal."[1033] It must be acknowledged that although Hindus do not reject Jesus, they deny his uniqueness.

Some argue on this issue in a slightly modified way, using terms like uniqueness and oneness. Ravi Ravindra, a native of India now settled in Canada, professor in the departments of Comparative Religions and Philosophy explains it thus,

> Each human being is the manifestation of One Divine Energy, but at the same time, each person presents a unique potential (and corresponding particular difficulties) and is a wondrously unique expression of the Vastness. Each person is related with the oneness, but no person is replaceable by another. The One is unique in each manifestation… From

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[1031] For more specific views on the non-Christian thinkers on Jesus see Paul J. Griffiths ed., *Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990).

[1032] But it is should be noted that Gandhiji, one of the noted Hindu thinkers saw self-sacrifice as the supreme symbolic significance of Jesus. See also J. W. Douglass, "From Gandhi to Christ: God as Suffering Love," in *Gandhi on Christianity*, ed. R. Ellsberg (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 101-108.

[1033] Ram-Prasad, "Hindu Views of Jesus," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths*, 89.

a Hindu point of view there is no difficulty with the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. However, this uniqueness is embedded in an underlying oneness, for ultimately there is only the One… (one only, without a second)."[1034]

Further, Amanda Mills maintains, "his uniqueness does not imply a religious exclusivism… His extraordinary empowerment does not necessarily make him the only instance in time of a reconciliation between the divine and the human natures, although certainly one of great significance."[1035] From this, one may conclude that Hindus neither object nor reject the uniqueness of Jesus Christ but that they deny the exclusive claim of universality.

4.2.3.2 Christianity and Buddhism

Buddhism, a religion founded by and centred upon the teachings of Gautama Buddha, is purely non-theistic. It propagates practises of the threefold training (Morality, Concentration and Wisdom), the four Noble Truths (emphasising the truth about the reality of sufferings) and the Eightfold path (paths leading to *Nirvana*; a place of perfect peace and happiness, like heaven) as its central teaching. The term Buddha literally means 'enlightened one,' a designation based on realisation.[1036] Buddha clearly regarded himself as no more than a path-finder and a teacher or guide, rather than a saviour.[1037] Buddha's last days referred both to his own mortality or radical finitude and also called attention to the ultimate self-reliance of his disciples.

Soteriology in Buddhism is based on the idea that no divine or eternal person remains to be worshiped, invoked, or expected to return once the Buddha departs. While Buddha's path of liberation was regarded as unique in the sense of the new and absolutely reliable, discipleship of Buddha was never regarded as the only way to *Nirvana*. Though there are ascetics who followed Buddha, tradition also acknowledges the existence of people who

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[1034] Ravi Ravindra, "Jesus is not an Idol," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths*, 96.

[1035] Amanda Mills, "Jesus: Emissary of Divine Love," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths*, 106.

[1036] This title is actually not originally attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism. Even some spiritual and religious masters of different religious traditions such as Jainism were regarded by their followers as the embodiment of that experience and called Buddha.

[1037] He acknowledged that there is *Nirvana* (eternity) and a path which leads to *Nirvana* and saw himself as an advisor. See also E. Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism* (Leuven, 1988), 644. The original is a French edition, 1958).

have reached the stage of enlightenment without the help of Buddha.[1038] This is an important element of Buddhism in that it shows tolerance to all other religions.

Buddhists also recognise the figure of Jesus Christ as a Buddha. Daisetz T. Suzuki, a famous Zen master and one of the pioneers of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue, states that for him Jesus Christ is "a manifestation of the *Dharmakaya* in human form."[1039] By maintaining such a view about Jesus Christ, Buddhists acknowledge no particular or soteriological meaning to his suffering, death, and resurrection, since sufferings, according to them, have no soteriological function. In viewing Jesus Christ as a Buddha, he becomes one among the many wisdom teachers.[1040] Buddhist thinkers consider the Christian emphasis on Jesus' uniqueness as a saviour to be a theological error. For the Theravada Buddhist[1041] monk Ajarn Buddhadasa, Jesus was an apostle or prophet of the truth who was on a par with Buddha. However, Jesus' message, he believed, was sufficient for salvation.

The Christian portrayal of Jesus' identity as God and their belief that he is unique, are problematic in Buddhism. Buddhists consider Jesus as one of the manifestations of the deity, or the embodiment of a particular quality or attribute of a deity – like wisdom (*sophia*) or 'the word' (*logos*). Besides, "Buddhists repudiate the notion of a creator God, since they maintain that the universe is beginningless… reject the idea of a being which is pure beginningless time… balk at the idea that any deity is capable of granting salvation to others simply through an act of will."[1042] In light of this, they conclude that Jesus cannot be the incarnation of such a God.

Concerning salvation, Buddhist doctrinal presuppositions are clearly in contrast to traditional Christianity. Buddhism has "no God to help man in his need. It is Dharma

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[1038] Cf. Catherine Cornille, "Buddhist View of Christ and the Question of Uniqueness," in *The Myriad Christ*, 252-255.

[1039] D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 259.

[1040] Cf. Cornille, "Buddhist View of Christ and the Question of Uniqueness," 255.

[1041] There are two major branches in Buddhism – Theravada ('the School of Elders') and Mahayana ('the Great Vehicle'). They are to be understood as different expressions of the same teachings of the historical Buddha.

[1042] José Ignacio Cabezón, "Buddhist Views of Jesus," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths*, 22-23.

which will help man to obtain liberation from misery."[1043] Each one is responsible for his/her own life. Each causes one's own sufferings and hence each one is responsible for his/her own liberation. This means that our salvation or damnation is independent from any historical event or any single figure that appeared in history, or upon accepting that particular historical person as saviour. Salvation is neither granted to nor is it withheld from humanity; it is self-earned. Arguing in this fashion, Buddhists conclude that Jesus can neither bring salvation, nor can he be the saviour of the world.

4.2.3.3 Christianity and Islam

Christianity and Islam, as is popularly known, share much common historical and ancient tradition including a common origin, tracing their roots to Abraham. They share not only the monotheistic faith but also a common foundation of historical records. In addition, they both share the twin commandments of love of God and love of neighbour, although their interpretations of these differ. Despite similarities between these two faiths, there are some major theological differences, the most serious among them being the person of Jesus Christ. Muslims recognise Jesus as a prophet (*Masih*), accept the fact that he is miraculously born of the Virgin Mary, but do not believe him to be the Son of God. The conflict here is – whether Jesus is one of many prophets as Islam believes or God's definite self-manifestation as the Christian message proclaims? Moreover, Islam also denies the three crucial Christian doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection. Like Judaism, Islam denies Christ's claim to divinity. The logic of the Quran does not allow that Jesus, a prophet and a man of God, could be crucified. The crucifixion of Jesus would have meant that his enemies had triumphed and God would never allow that.[1044]

When one juxtaposes these two religions, the question arises as to whether the differences between Christianity and Islam can be reconciled, or whether they necessarily remain unsettled? Can this so-called doctrinal conflict between Islam and Christianity be overcome in reality? Since the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, there has been a

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[1043] M. Dhavamony, "The Buddha and the Christ," *Studia Missionalia* 50 (2001): 335. *Dharma*, which is generally understood as 'good deed' of a person, has three functions according to the Buddhist understanding: leader, comforter and teacher.

[1044] Harald Suermann, "The Rational Defense of Christology within the Context of Islamic Monotheism," in *The Myriad Christ*, 274.

widespread desire among all ranks in the Church for a new relationship with Islam, and for increased respect for Mohammed. But this positive approach seems to be opposed by Christianity's classical profession that in the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God has revealed himself absolutely, and in eschatological definitiveness.[1045]

In mainstream Christian theology, the mystery of Jesus, as confessed at Chalcedon (451) and as understood in the Second Council of Constantinople (553) is "the principle of understanding, the yardstick by which the data of other religious traditions would be measured."[1046] Once again, some crucial questions here would be – Could this be a contestable yardstick to begin a dialogue with the Muslims? Is not the sincere wish to enter into new relationship with the Muslims through dialogue, hindered?

In Islam Jesus is considered as only human and remains absolutely an earthly creature, without being elevated and deified. Islam argues that Jesus was just a human being, an '*abd*' which means 'creature,' 'servant' or 'slave' of God (Quran 4:172; 19:30; 43:59) and that he was different from the common people in that he was made a prophet, received from God special knowledge, and performed miracles only through God (Quran 5:110).[1047] Mohammed and the Quran pose an important question to Christianity concerning Christian understanding of monotheism and the use of their doctrinal language such as 'consubstantial' (*homoousios*) and 'one in being with the Father.'[1048] Islam, moreover, does not agree and accept the notion of original sin, since God being infinitely merciful has wiped away such sin. Hence, Mustansir Mir (originally from Pakistan), University Professor of Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University contends:

> There is no need for God to offer himself in sacrifice to remove that sin. As for the inadequacy of any human being to erase an infinite sin and the consequent necessity for God himself to offer himself in sacrifice, the Muslim view is that, even if the presence of

[1045] Wiel Logister, "The Challenge of Mohammed to the Place of Jesus Christ," in *The Myriad Christ*, 263.

[1046] Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 242.

[1047] Mustansir Mir, "Islamic Views of Jesus," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths*, 120.

[1048] Cf. Günter Risse, *Gott ist Christus, der Sohn der Maria: Eine Studie zum Christusbild im Koran* (Bonn: 1989); Hugh Goddard, *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity* (London: Grey Seal Books, 1996).

> infinite sin is granted, God's infinite mercy should be efficacious enough to wipe out such a sin at the outset.[1049]

When Islam argues in this fashion and posits such queries, it appears as if the issues of uniqueness, universality, and salvation through Jesus seem to lack rational or spiritual basis.

Finally, can Christians find a way of accepting the Quran as divine revelation, in spite of its religious stance that contradicts Christ's death on the cross as leading to the salvation of humankind? "Can Muslims and Christians accept that they may both have different parts of the same truth? Or will each side remain forever convinced that they alone have the route to divine salvation?"[1050] These are some crucial questions that the Church today should seriously engage in, as she enters into sincere dialogue with Islam.

Concluding Remarks

We have tried to locate and discuss some of the unavoidable challenges that Christianity in India faces today, especially in the context of globalisation and religious pluralism. These are however yet to be harmoniously settled, and serious efforts are underway by theologians in different parts of Asia. *Ecclesia in Asia* insists that there can be no true evangelisation without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord (EA 19) and calls the churches in Asia to develop a pedagogy to present Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (EA 20). However, given that India is a cradle of world religions, this understanding, experience, and expression of Jesus Christ has witnessed many variations and differences, including some theological complexities.

Kasper forcefully expresses the same conclusions. His prime concern is not just to proclaim the uniqueness and universality of Jesus, but to proclaim it clearly and fully. As the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, he strove to sustain the Christian identity by engaging himself in various dialogues with leaders of other religions. His quest today is to continue to sustain this identity and not only remain tolerant, but also live together respectfully with those who belong to other cultures and

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[1049] Mir, "Islamic Views of Jesus," 122.

[1050] Mona Siddiqui, "Jesus in Popular Muslim Thought," in *Jesus in the World's Faiths*, 130.

religions and to learn from each other in dialogue.[1051] However, he warns against the danger of syncretism or of christological relativism, which seem to many Indian thinkers, at times unavoidable. Discussing issues like universal salvation in Jesus Christ, one Church of Jesus Christ, Christ as the mediator between God and man etc., and seeking answers to these topics of concer remain crucial for Christians, for the Church, and also for members of other faiths, with whom Christianity coexists.

Discussing christological mysteries in the Indian multi-religious ambience has frequently encountered various difficulties and obstacles. Some prominent thinkers, both Christian and non-Christian, have made quite substantial christological contributions, in trying to analyse Christology in different contextual situations, especially relating to poverty. In spite of many different factors such as awareness of cultural, linguistic, social and religious pluralism and the complexities these have caused, Christianity has proved to be a harmonious and welcoming religion. It is bound with the person of Jesus Christ, the perfect and final revelation of God in history. Christianity and the Catholic Church seek viable solutions to the challenges they face in proclaiming the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ. The following (final) chapter will attempt some answers/suggestions to these difficulties.

[1051] Cf. Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: T and T Clark, 2011), X

CHAPTER 5
WALTER KASPER, MICHAEL AMALADOSS AND FELIX WILFRED
POINTS OF CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES

Introduction

The thesis has arrived at its final segment. It is appropriate to specify some key thoughts that define Western and Asian/Indian theological thinking, before the issues of convergence and divergence are taken up for discussion. At this juncture, the author of this study would like to inform the reader that while working on this thesis he met Cardinal Walter Kasper twice and conducted two enriching and productive interviews.[1052]

Walter Kasper, as mentioned earlier, is faithful to the Scriptures and Traditions, Dogmas and teachings of the Church, and his fidelity is clearly reflected in his christological reflections. As President of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity and Chairman of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, he also played a prominent role as an interpreter of the Second Vatican Council to the world outside the Vatican. His theological endeavor is the consequence of his constant systematic reflection on how to meaningfully translate Christian traditions in the present modern world.[1053]

On the other hand, a general glance at the works and writings for Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred gives one certainty that their method of theologising is 'from below.' Being Asians themselves and having a practical experience, they are well aware of the Asian realities. The challenges of this continent, marked by poverty and inequality, cultural, linguistic and religious pluralism, are at the top of their theological venture.[1054] Hence

[1052] The first interview with Cardinal Walter Kasper was at Walter Kasper Institute, Vallendar, Germany, on March 19, 2014, during a symposium, and the second interview was on January 16, 2015, in Rome at his residence. Henceforth the material used from these interviews will be cited as Interview 1 and Interview 2.

[1053] For more on the theology of Walter Kasper see Kristin M. Colberg and Robert A. Krieg ed., *Speaking the Truth in Love*: *The Theology of Cardinal Walter Kasper* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Glazier, 2014).

[1054] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 118. Kasper duly acknowledges that Christianity, being a minority religion is facing great challenges from different perspectives.

theologising is done from the perspective of the poor and the marginalised, popularly termed as contextual theologising.

Further, the writings and theological reflections of Amaladoss and Wilfred, when systematically analysed, lead to a definite conclusion - both these Indian theologians observe that the person of Jesus Christ in India is reflected at an experiential level, as these consider religion more a relationship, an experience.[1055] They, without speculation, categorically regard that these experiences naturally vary according to each individual, given the different social contexts. Amaladoss highlights three different social contexts in India, in which Jesus Christ is experienced: poverty, weighed down with various kinds of inequalities, an impassionate search for the Absolute at various levels, and finally India, being a multi-religious country, experiences a clash concerning the issue of Absolutes,[1056] resulting in variety of faith experiences.

Asian theology tries to approach the mystery of God via *theologia negativa* for two reasons: the nature of the divine Mystery as ineffable and hence there exists an inadequacy of the human language in comprehending this ultimate reality. God still remains an incomprehensible mystery, athough he has revealed himself to humanity. Asian theology, recognising God as a person, however emphasises that he is more than a person; he is transpersonal. However, it warns the danger and tendency of reducing this inexhaustible mystery to the category of a person.[1057]

Wilfred duly emphasises the role of various faculties in humans that facilitate one's encounter with God and God's revelation: senses, imagination, mind and spirit. Therefore, theology, according to him, "may not be reduced to the activity of the rational mind which defines concepts and creates systems of thoughts."[1058] Wilfred emphasises that all the faculties of a person are involved when God's Word encounters a human being, besides his intellect. Furthermore, Asian theology also emphasises the significant

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[1055] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *Making Harmony: Living in a Pluralistic World* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 137.

[1056] Amaladoss, "Images of Jesus in India," 6.

[1057] Piet Schoonenberg, among Western theologians, has attempted to reflect on both these aspects from a Christian point of view but with reference to the Hindu tradition. Cf „Der persönliche Gott und das unpersönlich Göttliche," in his *Auf Gott hin denken* (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 46-68.

[1058] Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 900.

role of Asian heritage and Christian tradition, which also play a significant role in experiencing this great Mystery.

When Walter Kasper, who is dogmatic in his thinking and analytic in his reasoning, is juxtaposed with the two abovementioned Indian theologians, who appear to be more dialectic in their assessment and method of theologising, they indicate certain convergences and divergences. These are classified mainly under three subheadings: Uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ and his unique mediation, Salvation in Christianity and other religions, and finally the need for dialogue.

5.1 Uniqueness of the Person of Jesus Christ and his Unique Mediation

The issue concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his unique mediation in the light of other religions has become a matter of great concern for the Catholic Church, especially in recent years. It has often brought theologians as well as leaders of different religions on a common platform. Although *Dominus Iesus* has clearly and categorically emphasised the uniqueness and universality of Christ's redemption, the mediating action of Christ in other religions is not yet fully explored.

5.1.1 Definition of Uniqueness

Uniqueness literally means the property of being remarkable, extraordinary, only one of its kind, something that makes one stand out from the rest. In this sense, each person is unique and hardly repeatable. However, when Christianity applies this word to Jesus, it acquires a deeper meaning. Jesus Christ is unique in the sense that, he alone, of all who ever lived, was both God and man at the same time. Furthermore, the official teaching of the Catholic Church maintains that Jesus Christ is unique and universal and the only mediator between God and man. He is God's definitive and ultimate revelation and the salvation that he offers is unique and unparalleled, excluding the possibility of any other saviours in the world.

5.1.2 Absoluteness of Christianity Challenged in India

The history of Indian religions acknowledges that Christianity, like Islam and Zoroastrianism, entered India through invaders, travellers and some famous missionaries. Tradition has it that, the Christian missionaries in the past not only proclaimed Jesus Christ but also sometimes imposed the christological doctrines, considering them as universal truth. (This element has been dealt in the previous chapter.) India, which always welcomed new religious ideas and showed tolerance to other religions, eventually found such indoctrination problematic. Even today, the question concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his universal mediation is been called into question and challenged.

Indians, when they heard the name of Jesus, went back to their own religious traditions, giving him names which they found appropriate like *Avatara* (God descending in human form), *Guru* (the great teacher), *Ishwara* (the Lord over creation), *Yogi* (a self-realised person) and a *Saint* (a holy person who practised non-violence). However, these names failed to elaborately bring out the meaning and significance of Jesus in the context of Indian religious traditions. Many Christian believers call Jesus as the only *avatara* acknowledging, that God became man through the incarnation of Jesus.[1059] More recently Christian believers have also started to identify in Jesus a liberator.[1060]

As the awareness of pluralism in India, namely, social, cultural and religious pluralism became critical, fundamental doctrines of Christianity like the absoluteness of Jesus Christ, his role as the unique mediator, and his identity as the absolute saviour, started facing major setbacks. Questions were raised, like: does Christianity alone possess all truths? Is Christianity by its claim to absoluteness, trying to deny values inherent in other religions? Meanwhile, Christianity took recourse to the magisterial teachings of the Church and defended its central teaching that Jesus Christ is the unique and universal mediator between God and humans and universal salvation is possible only through Christ. However, the Chalcedonian formula and definition, unfortunately, was found not

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[1059] See A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study of the Johannine Doctrine of Love* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1928). Also see V. Chakkarai, *Jesus the Avatara* (Madras: CLS, 1932).

[1060] Cf. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, 1977; S. Kappen, ed., *Jesus Today* (Madras: AICUF, 1985); Samuel Rayan, "An Indian Christology – A Discussion of Method," *Jeevadhara* 1 (1971): 212-227; M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization* (Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1971).

quite intelligible especially in India,[1061] because India engaged itself in searching for contemporary and relevant answers using new language.

5.1.3 The Unique Person of Jesus Christ

Modern world challenges God and even the absoluteness of Christianity. On the one hand, according to Kantian philosophy of noumenon and phenomenon, one cannot conceive and comprehend the essence of God, God in himself. However, one can know God to the extent of what he means for the seeker. Hence, what one considers and understands as transcendental reality is nothing but the ideal representations, figures and concepts. Therefore any claim for absoluteness is unjustified.[1062] On the other hand, according to Kasper, Hegel and especially Nietzsche's notion of the 'death of God' is found appealing today because this caption in some sense describes the modern world, especially its social and spiritual *status quo*. Kasper, summarising their thought rightly interprets that this pronunciamento does not literally mean that God is dead, but that "belief in him affords no impulse of any kind that might be said to determine human life and human history."[1063]

Christianity, as a historical and revealed religion, has received its unique and absolute character from its founder, Jesus Christ. The identity of Jesus Christ, his person and mission are some of the recurring themes found in the Gospel, especially up to the confession pericope.[1064] Who was Jesus? How were his words and his works related to his person? Did Jesus himself ever think that he was a unique person with a unique mission? Such and similar questions concerning the identity and mission of Jesus cannot be answered on the spur of the moment. Right understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures, development of Traditions, history of the christological dogmas and the magisterial teachings of the Church, are necessary in exploring these questions.

[1061] Cf. Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 784.

[1062] Cf. Kasper, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," 10.

[1063] Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, 1; idem, „Das Kreuz als Offenbarung der Liebe Gottes," 3-4.

[1064] Cf. Piet J. Naudé, '"But you, who do you say I am?' A Homily on Ideological Faith from the Gospel of Mark," in *Who is Jesus Christ for us Today? Pathways to Contemporary Christology*, ed, Andreas Schuele and Günter Thomas (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 136-142.

Kasper contends that God, who is a mystery and remains a mystery, has revealed himself once-and-for-all in Jesus Christ, presenting Jesus Christ as the mediator between himself and man. It is through this 'once-and-for-all' giving in Jesus Christ, that life became victorious over death, truth victorious over falsehood and justice and love victorious over hatred and violence.[1065] Kasper tries to prove that Jesus is the loving self-manifestation of God; God's self-communicating love in person, the *Kyrios*, the Son of God. This Jesus, the Son, will finally subject himself to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Hence, every believer can boldly say "*Non confundar in aeternum.*"[1066] The claim of absoluteness and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is justified since God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus, and Jesus has not only announced salvation, but also declared himself as the way to salvation.

5.1.4 Walter Kasper on the Uniqueness of Jesus' Mediation

The object of Kasper's christological writings is crystal clear. He writes in a limpid style that his work, especially *Jesus the Christ*, is an attempt to convey the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ with the help of Pneumatology and thereby to develop a clear Spirit-Christology.[1067] Laying a very strong biblical foundation he refers to the Pauline letters, capitalising on the word 'everything.' Everything was created for Jesus Christ (cf. Col 1:16; 1 Cor 8:6) and everything is to be gathered in him and united in him, things in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10). This expression 'everything,' Kasper argues, reaches far beyond the sphere of all religions and includes the entire reality, the entire cosmos, and places it under its saviour Jesus Christ and at his service. In him "all the aspirations of history and culture converge;" he is the "central point of humanity, the jewel of hearts and the fulfilment of every heart's desire" (GS 45).[1068]

Kasper agrees that the world is pluralistic, the community is pluralistic, even cultures and religions are pluralistic and they are today a theological challenge.[1069] We are not only living in such a pluralistic world, but also suffering under pluralism. Further, the progress

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[1065] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 230-274.

[1066] Kasper, "Individual Salvation and Eschatological Consummation," 18.

[1067] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (the latest edition), xvi. See also, „Aspekte gegenwärtiger Pneumatologie," 7-22.

[1068] Kasper, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," 17-18.

[1069] Cf. Walter Kasper, "Relating Christ's Universality to Interreligious Dialogue," *Pro Dialogo* 106, no. 1 (2001): 78-80.

and the openings facilitated by the Second Vatican Council have also contributed to religious pluralism.[1070] In spite of global pluralism, where the meaning of life and truth in a secular and historical world is growing stronger, Kasper brings to light the central principal truth that Jesus is the Christ. The confession that 'Jesus is the Christ' is for Kasper "the answer to the question of salvation and redemption."[1071] The expression 'Jesus is the Christ' is a classical one in the entire Christian theology and the highpoint of Christology, especially in the world of religious pluralism,[1072] though some scholars have argued against Christian exclusivism, which claims to possess complete truth about God. Nevertheless, non-absoluteness of Christianity has been equally argued for and justified, thereby advocating religious pluralism.[1073]

Kasper, in his *Jesus the Christ*, attempts to prove that Jesus is the Son of God come from the Father, and does the Father's will. Hence he considers incarnation as a very significant event in the history of the world. He believes that the message of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached was God's self-communicating love for humanity, a love intended to re-unite the broken and wounded humanity, and thereby offer to all those who accept this message, individual and universal salvation. Kasper opines that through the miracles that Jesus performed, God carried out his plan of salvation for mankind and for the world. The passion and death of Jesus is for Kasper, the climax of the entire activity of the historical Jesus. Finally, through the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (the greatest miracle), a redemptive act of divine power and a new age has dawned. Jesus is now the mediator between God and humanity, the giver of the Holy Spirit and through this Holy Spirit, all can share in the life of God.

[1070] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Erneuerung des dogmatischen Prinzips," in *Veritati Catholicae*, ed. A. Ziegenaus (Aschaffenburg: Pattloch, 1985), 43. Cf. also Franz-Xaver Kaufman, *Kirche begreifen. Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1979), 90f.

[1071] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 41.

[1072] Kasper identifies not only an increase in cultural pluralism but also a rapid increase in religious pluralism. Though different religions try to coexist harmoniously, yet some key issues appear indeed conflicting and controversial, since they lack unanimous acceptance, like the identity of the person of Jesus Christ and his unique universal mediation in our secularised world.

[1073] See John Hick and Paul Knitter, ed., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987); John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, second edition (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, ed., *Christianity and Other Religions*, revised edition (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001); John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Towards the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985); Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995); Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes, ed., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007).

Kasper holds firm that through incarnation, Jesus has made this divine-human encounter possible and he is the answer to the question 'Who is God?'[1074] When the life of Jesus is rightly examined, one gets the feeling that he is a person who does not fit into any category known so far, and therefore, Kasper affirms that Jesus is unique, a person who has dedicated himself to God and human beings. In him and through him humanity comes to know God, God's glory and God's grace. Jesus Christ is the goal of human history and in his person, the search for a new human being, new humanity is realised. His very existence is for all, a man for other men.

Kasper clearly holds that "Jesus Christ is unique and irreducible concretization of history's universal essence" and from him "light is reflected on the otherwise ambivalent and allusive signposts of history."[1075] Jesus Christ for him is "God's ultimate and definitive future," "the actual realisation of Christian future" and "the foundation and criterion of Christian hope in the future."[1076] He justifies Jesus' unique yet universal position in history on existential grounds. Jesus is not only a member of mankind, but the beginning of new humanity and the centre of existence. Something happened in him and through him once and for all, that is, the reconciliation of the world which gave new quality to humanity and established a new beginning.[1077]

Furthermore, Jesus Christ is unique and universal for Kasper because he not only sees in Jesus the actual shape and form of God's future, but he also recognises this presence of God's future becoming clear and unequivocal, when people acknowledge Jesus Christ and sincerely attempt to live this confession of faith.[1078] Acknowledging Jesus Christ, opines Kasper, is nothing other than recognising that "in him the mystery man, his greatness and his misery, has become the grammar and the mode of utterance of the mystery of God in a unique and nevertheless universally valid manner."[1079] In Jesus Christ the definitive significance of history is concretised. He is not only a sign, but an

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[1074] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 70.

[1075] Kasper, *Methods of Dogmatic Theology*, 60-61.

[1076] Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, 12.

[1077] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 215-218.

[1078] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Glaube und Taufe," in *Christsein ohne Entscheidung oder soll die Kirche Kinder Taufen?* ed. Walter Kasper (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1970), 137-138. Here Kasper explains clearly that faith is not only the necessary medium of salvation but a third mediator between man and salvation. Faith is therefore, the subjective-personal element of salvation and justification of man (Rom 1:17; 3:22, 26, 28).

[1079] Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, 38.

effective sign of God in the world, through whom and in whom the meaning and the essence of the world is revealed and concretely occurs.[1080] In Jesus Christ, God has revealed himself as the God of love, as the answer to the secrets of humanity and the world, and as the answer to the deep yearnings of humanity for acceptance and love.[1081] Kasper reiterates:

> Jesus' unique yet universal position in history is founded in representation as the decisive centre of his existence. For it is through his representation that he has a universal significance as one and unique. Something occurred through him once and for all: the reconciliation of the world.[1082]

Kasper clearly shows how Jesus, through his incarnation, enters into human history, into a world full of problems, misfortunes and disasters, and through his obedience and especially through his death on the cross, defeats the power of death, offering humanity a new beginning.

5.1.5 Michael Amaladoss on the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

In the context of plurality of religions in India, Amaladoss analyses the Indian understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ under two perspectives. Some, according to him, see Christ as the fulfilment of other religions (comparative and evolutionary perspective) and some others accept him as the cosmic Christ (scriptural perspective, inspired through text such as Jn 1:1-9 and Col 1:15-17).[1083] In the Indian context, every religion considers itself to be the fulfilment of all other religions. If on the one hand, Buddhism considers all religions as irrelevant, Hinduism, on the other hand, sees *advaita* (principle of nonduality, Shankara being the first historical proponent) as the final stage of spiritual realisation. Such comparative language, opines Amaladoss, should best be avoided. Grading and ranking of religions is irrelevant opines Amaladoss, since, "we see that the majority of the humans are finding meaning and fulfilment in their lives in and

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[1080] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Die Kirche als universales Sakrament des Heils: Überlegungen zur Theologie der Mission," in *Universales Christentum angesichts einer pluralen Welt*, ed. Andreas Bsteh (Mödling: St. Gabriel Verlag, 1976), 44.

[1081] Cf. Kasper, „Offenbarung und Geheimnis," 232.

[1082] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 217.

[1083] Cf. Amaladoss, "Images of Jesus in India," 11.

through their own religion."[1084] Further, he believes that such exclusive theological language applied to Jesus is Western in style, apparently untenable in the Indian pluralistic context.

Amaladoss does speak about universality but he discusses this at the eternal/divine level. He admits that the divine historical plan realised in Jesus Christ has got a universal significance and relevance. However, he argues against the universalisation of the historical/particular, which makes it historically universal. Further he opines that "it is not helpful to affirm the 'objective' universality of Christ and draw a priori historical conclusions from it."[1085] Rather, according to his perception, we need to really understand how people, even those outside the church reach salvation, confessing their faith in Jesus as Christ.

Regarding Peter's answer to Jesus' question, "Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16:13-16) Amaladoss opines, it reflects mostly the culture and the context of Israel. Based on this reality, he further argues that when we answer this question today, our answers too should result from our own different cultural and contextual situation: "Who do we think Jesus is?"[1086] The quest of the identity and significance of Jesus did not see its end with the first disciples and the early discipleship of Jesus. Jesus today, has many titles since each generation has tried to respond to the identity of Jesus in its own socio-cultural and religious context,[1087] a fact which Kasper too agrees with.[1088] Given the fact that each one experiences Jesus from a different perspective and socio-cultural context, is it justified that one, especially a Catholic theologian, should overlook the central mysteries of Jesus' incarnation, passion, death and resurrection, and challenge their unique and universal significance?

Amaladoss has another criterion in arguing for the significance of Jesus Christ and his uniqueness today. People with an authentic encounter with Jesus, experienced the real presence of God and his action in the world in a new and unique way. To them, in the life

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[1084] Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 237.

[1085] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 412 and 413.

[1086] Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 782.

[1087] Cf. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 195.

[1088] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 163.

and deeds of Jesus, God himself was present and people did have a glimpse of God's attributes. Amaladoss contends:

> God is authentically encountered today, not in 'sacred mysteries', but in the poor and the marginalized to whom the Reign of God is proclaimed and in whom it is slowly taking shape. The criterion of the truth of God's humanity in Jesus is not abstract dogmas but a community that opts for the poor and does justice, respecting the divine and human freedoms operative in history… This is also the best language in which we can speak about Jesus today.[1089]

One could then seriously question Amaladoss' understanding of the 'sacred mysteries.' Generally understood, sacred mysteries are religious beliefs, rituals and different religious practises that are sacred, and which intend to initiate one into the fundamental human-divine relationship and illuminate him/her. Granted, that while these sacred mysteries cannot be rationally and scientifically explained, and are therefore to be rightly interpreted, we believe that they do effect a human-divine encounter. Amaladoss might probably not be satisfied in the way these sacred mysteries are interpreted, especially in a poverty-stricken country like India.

According to Amaladoss there are two different impressions concerning the identity, uniqueness, and the significance of Jesus – impressions the disciples of Jesus themselves had and those of the later Fathers of the Church. If the former described the personality of Jesus, believing history as God's saving action, the latter subsequently, addressed this issue philosophically, resulting in an ontological description. If the former tried to answer the question *what* Jesus did, the latter tried to formulate answers to the question *who* Jesus was. Referring to the Fathers of the Church, Amaladoss puts it succinctly:

> They affirmed Jesus' divinity because otherwise Jesus could not have communicated God's life to the people in the process of divinizing them. They affirmed his humanity because he could not divinize human nature without assuming himself. The incarnation itself is seen as divinizing so that the paschal mystery only confirms what has happened

[1089] Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 794. As a matter of fact, it should be noted that Vatican II is the only council in the history of the Church which spoke of the poor, the first being the Council of Jerusalem, which gave the injunction to 'remember the poor.' The truth, that Asia is still home for the greatest number of the poor in the world, also remains undisputed. Cf. Felix Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multireligious Continent," *CONC* 3 (2012): 117.

> already in the incarnation. The divinization takes place first of all in himself and then others participate in it.[1090]

Amaladoss has no problem in accepting the divinity and humanity of Jesus, presented in this manner. But he finds this characterisation rather deficient and inadequate, since it does not clearly explain how the divinization of humanity takes place in the lives of the people. Added to this, as mentioned earlier, he believes that the Chalcedonian definition seems to be neither quite intelligible to Indians nor can it be translated in Indian languages. Eventually, he opines that the explanatory punch of the story of Jesus for humanity and our society today is missing.

As a solution, Amaladoss proposes the need for a new language, a new way of interpreting the fundamentals. If Jesus and his message have to be effective, he firmly believes that the Jesus-story should be retold in simple language, avoiding abstract expressions and formulations. Eventually, according to him, such pedagogy would help in rediscovering the mystery of Jesus and his significance to humanity.[1091] Reflecting back on the life of Jesus, Amaladoss identifies the vision of Jesus more as a way than a goal, because the life of Jesus, according to him, is not a pre-fabricated model to be imitated but it is an invitation to realise in our times the values of the Kingdom of God through the continual reshaping of our social structures.[1092] Kasper, in contrast to Amaladoss, argues that Jesus Christ is at once, the end, goal and recapitulation, and also, the beginning of a new future.[1093]

5.1.6 Felix Wilfred on the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

Wilfred, whose research and field work cover many disciplines in social sciences and humanities, as a preliminary remark acknowledges, that what Christianity is/has, especially its revelation and its mediation of revelation through Jesus Christ, others religions do not have. What Christianity is or has, is a unique revelation and a unique mediation through Jesus Christ. In this sense it could be said that Christianity is

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[1090] Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 785.

[1091] Cf. Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 784-785.

[1092] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 59.

[1093] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 218.

unique.[1094] Having 'Ultimate truth' as his point of departure, he puts it succinctly that Asians do not claim multiplicity of truths directly proportionate to the number of subjects (popularly known as relativism), but the one truth (*ekam sat*). This one truth, he argues, "remains always a Mystery which we approach reverently while we try to seek and understand its various aspects and dimensions."[1095]

Wilfred identifies the issue of Christian uniqueness as overwhelmingly complex and delicate, which in our present time and in our context of pluralism of religions runs the risk of being highly misunderstood. This issue of Christian uniqueness, he feels, has become a "burning theological issue… not only for the interrelations among peoples of various faiths, but for the Christian self-understanding itself."[1096] India is one of those nations found on the globe where a wide variety of religions and religious traditions are alive and vibrant. Undoubtedly, it has largely become the principal focus, when it comes to the question of Christian uniqueness.

Experience of divine seekers reveals that the distance between the divine and the human is seemingly wide and the distinction, cutting. In such a situation, the reality of mediation acquires prime importance. Christian theology presents Jesus as the mediator between God and man, though Wilfred remarks that this mystery of divine-human union in Jesus is challenged even now. All the same he acknowledges the significant role of Jesus Christ: "to open our eyes to the nearness and intimacy of God and to awaken us to the divine within."[1097] In other words, Jesus has a predominant role in helping us experience the mystery of God, in whom 'we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

Wilfred clarifies that India least engages itself in defining the metaphysical components of a *guru* (teacher). Basing on this reality he logically argues that the rudimentary element "in the encounter of India and Jesus Christ is not his metaphysical constitution (something that the Council of Chalcedon attempted to do), but the path he shows."[1098]

[1094] Though Wilfred acknowledges the uniqueness of Christianity, he foresees a risk here because such claims of uniqueness presuppose that 'the unique' must be necessarily accepted by all. Extremists could go to the extent of insisting that because Christianity is unique, it has the moral right to impose itself as the true religion. Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 661 - 662.

[1095] Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 905.

[1096] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 652.

[1097] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 86-87

[1098] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 670.

By doing so, one is certainly not trying to avoid the person of Jesus, restricting him only to his teaching, but rather one is engaging in reconstructing, re-appropriating and re-interpreting the personality of Jesus through his *marga* (path). The necessity and the importance of the path (*marga*) makes it clear why the language of uniqueness is bound to be quite alien in the Indian experience and interpretation of Jesus Christ.

Wilfred argumentatively explains the practical difficulty of the language of uniqueness and absoluteness attributed to Christianity. The language of uniqueness in the religious context unconditionally implies comparing and contrasting between different religions and their respective traditions. Judaism, Christianity and Islam understand themselves as revealed religions, as opposed to natural religions. In revealed religions, there are undoubtedly a series of mediators and prophets who have revealed themselves and who reveal God's plans, a God who intervenes in history and changes the course of mankind. Wilfred debates:

> How could one bring under one and the same umbrella of religions, Buddhism which denies God and Judaism and Islam which exalt the one and only God?... Thus Christianity and Islam can discuss whether Jesus Christ or Prophet Mohammed offer the last and definite word of God for the human race. This is possible because there is a common horizon of understanding against which the claim of uniqueness could make sense, and therefore one could meaningfully enter into a discussion about it. But this is not the case with Indic religious traditions. The discourse about uniqueness and absoluteness is hardly meaningful to people of Indic religious traditions which have quite a different religious universe.[1099]

Wilfred tries to reflect the problem of uniqueness and unique mediation of Jesus Christ from another angle. Accordingly he maintains:

> The discourse about unique mediation of Jesus Christ cannot be isolated from the overall questions of the claim of uniqueness and absoluteness for the Christian dispensation. In fact, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ has in practise, and from a historical point of view, overlapped with the uniqueness claims for Christian revelation, for Christian faith, for the

[1099] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 660.

community of the Church, and so on. From a theological point of view, too, Christ cannot be dissociated from his body of Christians (*Christus totus*), their faith, sacraments, etc.[1100]

Trying to identify the roots of the problem of uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ and his unique mediation, Wilfred, like Amaladoss, categorically identifies this issue to a large extent as a Western question. In recent years this issue has come to the forefront as a consequence of the emergence of other religious traditions, which appear challenging to Christianity as never before.[1101]

Wilfred argues that if there had to be only one universal religion, one mediator, one faith, the language of uniqueness would be redundant. The question seems to be logical – what is it that is compared when different religions are being discussed in relation to Christianity, whereby Christianity still qualifies itself to be unique? Moreover, the use of the language of uniqueness, the process of comparing and contrasting various religious traditions, so as to single out one among them (Christianity) as unique, cannot but present serious problems, especially in the Indian context. To avoid such key problems, Wilfred suggests the pressing need to speak of the mysteries of Jesus Christ and Christianity, avoiding the use of theological jargon advocating uniqueness.[1102] According to him, we should avoid taking metaphysical route as means to defend Christian theology, especially Christology. What we require today is rather the experience of the divine in our own personal lives and in our society. One fact is clear that India is neither concerned nor inclined to define the metaphysical constituents of the personality of Jesus. They call Jesus a *guru*, a teacher.[1103] In recent years, the understanding of Jesus as a *guru* has been

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[1100] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 654. Thus he prefers to address this entire issue from the point of Christian uniqueness, naturally with the issue of Christ's uniqueness as its chief concern.

[1101] Wilfred argues systematically how at a certain point of history, Christianity in the West differentiated itself from other religious traditions that were gradually mushrooming, focusing itself sharply on its own identity. Some dogmatic formulations like the uniqueness and absolute universality of Jesus Christ was emphasised as articles of faith, regardless of empirical verification. Other religious traditions, their doctrines, their mediators, etc., then were naturally considered to be of a lower order, if not false and irrelevant. Gradually, the evidence about the high ideals and spiritual values contained in the religious traditions of humankind turned to be so abundant and clear that it could no longer be ignored. Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 654-655.

[1102] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 87.

[1103] Cf. Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, 69-85. Chapter V of this book is dedicated to Jesus, as the *Guru*. Amaladoss has beautifully brought out the qualities of a *Guru* in Jesus, presenting him as a perfect and a special *Guru*, a new model unlike the Jewish *Gurus* (Rabbis) who just limited themselves in teaching the laws. Jesus, as a new *Guru* transcends all the existing ones, a *Guru* par excellence, who ends his journey of non-violence on the cross.

gladly accepted in the Indian religious context, because the term '*guru*' appeals to the language and cultural heritage of India.

Wilfred indeed has a significant point to make. Jesus is acknowledged and experienced because of what he is in solidarity with the people of India. Jesus' experience of self-emptying brings home forcefully to the people of India his true personality which vibrates with what they look up to as the highest ideals. In fact, in the Indian tradition aspects like sacrifice (*yajna*), renouncing, self-emptying and suffering are the marks of a person's closeness to the divine.[1104] Convinced of this truth Wilfred declares:

> This path of suffering and sacrifice, however, would not allow for a discourse on uniqueness, which tends to focus more on what separates Jesus from the people than on his point of insertion in the life of the people where he can be recognised in his true being and identity.[1105]

In a polemical way Wilfred tries to prove that Jesus transcends all cultures. As he understands it, universality and inculturation are not axiomatic truths that can be taken for granted. Though the divine mystery (Jesus) appeared to be a historical particularity, the disciples considered this Jesus-event to be a Mystery, *mysterium* that is trans-historical. St. Paul clearly says that the mystery of Christ is inexhaustible in its totality, in all its length, depth and breadth (cf. Eph 3:18; 1:9f; 1 Cor 2:6-9; Col 1:26f). It only gives us in a definite way, a glimpse into the total Mystery of God in whose bosom the only Son is (Jn 1:18) and from whom the Spirit proceeds. Similarly, Wilfred opines that "the Mystery of the resurrection and glory of the Word made flesh and his continued presence in the world through the Spirit elude the particularities of any one single culture or people. In this sense, he transcends all cultures."[1106]

In conclusion, it could be said that the terminologies promoting uniqueness, according to the understanding of Indian theologians, were of prime importance and concern for Western theology, as it gradually became aware of the other religious traditions and mediators. Added to this Kasper agrees that in the West, "erosion of traditional values

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[1104] Cf. K. N. Tiwari, *Dimensions of Renunciation in Advaita* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997).

[1105] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 670.

[1106] Felix Wilfred, "Dogma and Culture," *VJTR* 53, no. 7 (1989): 345-346.

and a widespread loss of orientation"[1107] were also witnessed. Amaladoss and Wilfred both are of the opinion that such a language in the Indian religious scenario is neither significant nor far-reaching. The debate concerning this issue is considered mainly as a contention among two Western factors – "the dogmatists and the reactionary liberals who try to relativize the claim of uniqueness."[1108]

India, on the contrary, has a different starting point and a different cultural and religious scenario. An overall assessment of its past history reveals that India is known for its long tradition of mutual relationship among the various faith traditions. Seen from the Indian perspective and especially from its harmonious religious traditions, many Indian theologians believe that, the need to use the language of uniqueness is banal. Jesus died and rose for all and by his blood has redeemed people from every tribe and language and nation (Rev 5:9) and everyone should come to the knowledge of this truth. Hence, the search for a new intelligible language in telling the story of Jesus in Asia is the need of the hour.

5.1.7 Uniqueness of Jesus Christ: Some Proposals

Taking into account the different positions concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the universal salvation presented above, Asian/Indian theologians strongly feel the need for some change as far as the understanding of the dogmas are concerned. In this regard, Indian theologians propose two suggestions: Need for a new language and a need to understand India's cultural context.

5.1.7.1 Need for a New Language

The Asian theologians point at two difficulties: understanding of revelation and the mode of interpretation. They argue that the Creed uses ancient Greek notions and hence they oppose the reduction of revelation to mere propositions of truth, to be adhered to as "object of faith."[1109] Asian theology, rather, prefers to see revelation as a core component,

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[1107] Kasper, "The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*," 26.

[1108] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 672.

[1109] Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "The Transmission of Divine Revelation," in *Commentary on the Documents of the Vatican II*, Vol. III, 196-198. Ratzinger observes that the teaching office of the Church, besides the task of authoritatively interpreting the Word of God (whether written or handed on through Scripture and

intrinsically belonging to a wider whole. Accordingly, Christian understanding of revelation, as presented to us in the Scriptures and in the Church traditions, is "much larger than a propositional view which has been dominant since the Council of Trent."[1110] The Council Fathers, during the Second Vatican Council had seriously discussed this method. Eventually, such a manualistic, propositional, neo-scholastic approach is superseded by this Council and also by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*.[1111]

The International Theological Commission on the interpretation of dogma (1989), discussing the theological problem of dogmas today states that their certitude was already called into question during the Reformation period. At a certain period of time, dogmatic theology was called dogmatism and was rejected. The Commission clearly declares:

> The problem becomes aggravated when Church tries to enter the African and Asian worlds with dogmas which have been forged, speaking historically, in the context of Greco-Roman and Western culture. This demands more than a mere translation. To achieve inculturation, the dogma must be stripped down to the original kernel to make it intelligible in a new culture. It is a problem involving all evangelization today, and especially where new factors affect the process of evangelization.[1112]

Amaladoss agrees with Kasper's understanding of the mission of the Church, namely, making Jesus known, reconciliation of hearts and unity of nations. But he contends that this principal mission of the Church could be effectively accomplished when the Jesus-story is re-told, concentrating on the question 'why' and not the 'how' of the story, thus

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Tradition), has also got a serving character. This serving character would be ultimately destroyed if the task of theology is reduced merely to proving of the source of the statements of the teaching office.

[1110] Felix Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," *VJTR* 62, no. 12 (1998): 891-892. Wilfred however admits that the Church, at times, had to indeed affirm such propositional statements as a counter-attack to rationalism and modernism. The Church did this specially in 1870 by promulgating *Dei Filius*, the dogmatic constitution of the First Vatican Council on the Catholic faith, and also through Pope Pius XII with his encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950 that addressed some false opinions, threatening to undermine the foundations of Catholic Doctrine.

[1111] Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini* given in Rome on September 30, 2010). For the entire text of this Exhortation visit http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html (accessed November 22, 2015).

[1112] Michael Sharkey and Thomas Weinandy, ed., *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents*, Vol. II, 1986-2007 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 29. For more on theological problems of evangelisation and interpretation of Dogmas, see chapter 15 of this book titled, *The Interpretation of Dogma* (1990). This document of the International Theological Commission was prepared under the direction of Cardinal Walter Kasper, who was then the Monsignor and Professor at Tübingen University.

avoiding further repetition of doctrinal definitions.[1113] He strongly believes that these dogmas require "constant reinterpretation and perhaps even transformation," since they are prone to be "culturally conditioned."[1114] The criterion of our dogmas, he explains, is our God-experience in Jesus mediated to us through Scriptures and Traditions. Hence they require constant reinterpretation, which would naturally lead to reconfiguration of faith experience.

Wilfred, in fact, sees a very close relationship between Scriptures and christological dogmas. These dogmas, he states, proceeding from the Scriptures, "mediate God's truth *for us* and *for our* salvation," and they are "conditioned in accordance with the historical and cultural condition of our human existence."[1115] The historical and cultural condition, opines Wilfred, calls for ever new embodiments and incarnations of the truth of revelation, resulting in new modes and formulations.

Further, Wilfred argues that the christological formulation of Chalcedon indeed played a very significant role, but in a particular culture and time, and in a specific historical and political context. To suppose that these formulas are the compendium of the entire New Testament witness about Jesus, in all its variety and richness, appears to him, a contested claim.[1116] It is clear that the institutional Church, since Chalcedon, took refuge in one single Christology but this needs to be reviewed today. Can we still accept with certainty that Chalcedonian Christology has epitomised the New Testament Christologies? According to Wilfred the Chalcedon formulations depend on one single strand of New Testament Christology, namely, relating to the pre-existence of Christ. He questions: What about the various contextual Christologies that derive their accents and inspiration from the same New Testament?

Wilfred, moreover, identifies the limits of Chalcedonian classical christological formulations. According to him:

[1113] Cf. Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 785.

[1114] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "The Hindu-Christian Encounter: Challenge and Promise," *EAPR* 44, no. 2 (2007): 202.

[1115] Felix Wilfred, "Dogma and Inculturation," *VJTR* 53, no. 7 (1989): 348.

[1116] Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 669.

> The limits lie not only in the *absence of any Soteriology* and silence on life, death, passion and resurrection of Christ, but also in the way they reduce the understanding of Christ to the level of the mind, whereas a true understanding and truth of Christ is to be derived from the involvement of the whole person – feeling, emotions, existential questions and issues through which the innumerable Christologies of popular religiosity, for example, approach his mystery.[1117]

Later in the history of dogmatic theology, we see how plurality of Christologies continued through subsequent centuries, giving birth to new concepts and images.[1118] Each Christology, he believes, had its validity as it came up "in a particular context and culture and responded to the issues and questions raised in that particular milieu and from horizons of different experiences."[1119]

5.1.7.2 Necessity of Considering the Cultural Context of India

Ecclesia in Asia proposed that the Church be open to new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia (EA 20). Christians are called to be faces of Christ to the people and this can be done only when Christians are deeply involved in their respective cultures. The exhortation further stated:

> An inculturation of the faith in the Asian Continent involves re-discovering of the Asian countenance of Jesus and identifying ways in which the cultures of Asia can grasp the universal saving significance of the mystery of Jesus and his Church. The penetration insight into peoples and their cultures, exemplified in such men as Giovanni da Montecorvino, Matteo Ricci and Robert de Nobili needs to be emulated at the present time (EA 20)[1120]

[1117] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 92.

[1118] Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His place in the History of Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

[1119] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 85-86.

[1120] Mario Saturnino Dias, ed., *Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia: A Celebration of Faith and Life at the First Asian Mission Congress* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006), 183. This aspect was stressed by the then Bishop Rev. George Phimphisan, Diocese of Udon Thani, Thailand, in his homily at the Asian Mission Congress. Kasper also emphasised this element of inculturation and re-discovering the Asian face of Jesus in his second interview, duly acknowledging the valuable contributions of Matteo Ricci in this venture, an Italian Jesuit and one of the prominent figures of the Jesuit China missions.

Amaladoss is convinced that "inculturation is a creative response of people to the gospel."[1121] Elements are used from one's culture so that one's response fits the gospel. Hence Asians feel that there is a great need today for different religions and cultures to come together, share and dialogue with each other, and this, Amaladoss calls, witnessing and evangelisation in action. This significant action of the spiritual journey of Asians should not be misunderstood or misjudged. One has to acknowledge here that the religious and cultural context of Asia/India is dynamic, and its spiritual encounter with other religions, vibrant.

A serious study of the New Testament results in manifold interpretations of Jesus and his mysteries. Wilfred maintains that one needs to go beyond a reconstruction of the past and arrive at a plurality of Christologies. This is possible in Asia because of its multi-religious and multi-cultural setting which would enable the contextual world of the reader and the text enter into dialogue. He believes that, "Christologies resulting from such a hermeneutical process are creative and are attuned to change and transformation."[1122] Wilfred finds it natural that the interpretation of the person and the message of Christ have presented not only different emphasis, "but also different modes of looking at them according to diversity of cultures and traditions and their experimental and conceptual particularities."[1123]

In spite of these proposals made by the Asian/Indian theologians, Kasper reiterates that the indissoluble bond between Scripture, Tradition and the communion of the Church should not be forgotten since these three form an intimate unity. The document, Interpretation of Dogma clarifies that this intimate unity between Scripture, Tradition and the communion of the Church, has its most profound basis in the Father's sending of his Word and his Spirit to the world as a gift. The Spirit produces the great work of salvation by inspiring people, helping them to acknowledge their faith in Jesus Christ and to witness him, thus guiding them to the fullness of truth (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13f).[1124]

[1121] Amaladoss, "The Hindu-Christian Encounter: Challenge and Promise," 202

[1122] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 85. The historical Jesus himself never gave a single picture of his own person. History shows that early Christianity lived with an extremely rich variety of Christologies; with none of them being the norm and model for the other. Within Judaism there were different interpretations of Jesus Christ and even within the life of a single author like St. Paul, we can find different Christologies.

[1123] Wilfred, "Dogma and Inculturation," 346.

[1124] Cf. Interpretation of Dogma (1990) in *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents.* Vol. II, see section C, part II, no. 1.

The dogmas have permanent value even though there is a need for contemporary interpretation. Hence, a clear distinction should be made between the permanently valid content of dogmas and the form in which they are expressed. In this regard, the aid of the Holy Spirit is to be sought because even in different cultural situations, the Holy Spirit continues to work in making the mystery of Christ present in all its freshness. Dogmas have only one aim – that the spirit of life may be born from the words of the dogmas.[1125]

5.2 Salvation in Christianity and Other Religions

It is appropriate to begin the investigation on the theme of salvation with an interesting observation made by Gerald O'Collins. In his book *Salvation for All. God's Other Peoples*, he tries to prove that the message of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God exceeded all frontiers of caste and race. Jesus executed the plan of God perfectly so that God's reign was for everyone. The passion and death of Jesus, which was followed by the crowning event of the resurrection confirmed the hopes of the disciples and early Christians that God, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and saved it.[1126] Did Jesus die and rise to save all and if so, how? These queries are often discussed among religious leaders and scholars even today under the topic 'Soteriology.'

5.2.1 Christian Understanding of Salvation

God has sent the Church as the "universal sacrament of salvation," a new name given by the Second Vatican Council (AD 5). Joseph F. Egan defines salvation as follows:

> *Salvation* is eternal life with God in heaven and on earth. Salvation is the life God wills for each person, a life befitting human dignity lived in justice and peace. That the church is the *universal* sacrament of salvation means that the church is present in all countries and cultures and reaches out to all as Jesus did, to sinners, to poor, to those who suffer and exist on the margins of society, to gays and lesbians, and even to her critics.[1127]

[1125] Cf. Interpretation of Dogma (1990), see section C, part III, no. 6.

[1126] Cf. Gerald O' Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 84-87; 100.

[1127] Joseph F. Eagan, *Vatican II Renewal: Path to the Future of the Church* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 195.

The Church teaches and the Christians believe that salvation is made possible through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and his triumphant resurrection. Words like 'atonement,' 'reconciliation,' 'liberation,' 'redemption,' and 'restoration' are also used as synonyms to signify the once-and-for-all saving act of Jesus for the restoration of the world from sin and its consequences. The word 'salvation' also communicates the meaning like 'preservation,' 'deliverance,' and 'healing.'

Scripture itself gives us a comprehensive meaning of what salvation means. It is the saving act of God through the death and resurrection of his Son (Jn 3:17; Rom 5:10; Eph 1:7, 13), a gracious gift of God, though at times undeserved (Eph 2:5, 8), and available only through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). God desires the salvation of all and that all come to the knowledge of the truth that there is one God and there is only one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:4-5). Through Jesus Christ, one is redeemed and delivered from the power and penalty of sin (Rom 6). Salvation, mystery of God, is now revealed in and through Jesus Christ (Eph 3:9; 6:19). Finally, salvation, which is holistic, has both a physical and a spiritual dimension and has to do with the deliverance of the whole person.

5.2.2 Salvation: Important Magisterial Teachings

Though the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning salvation has been already explained in detail, a few essential aspects need a mention here. This Council did not come out with explicitly new teachings concerning salvation. Rather it went back to the roots, Scripture and Tradition, re-defining that everything is created in and through Christ and everything is reconciled in him (Col 1:15-20; Jn 1:3-5; Heb 1.3; 1 Cor 8:6). Christ who died and was raised for all, can show man the way and strengthen him through the Spirit in order to be worthy of his destiny. Salvation is in the name of Jesus only and he is the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of man's history (GS 10, 45). Kasper reaffirms this biblical truth of the salvation of all men and adds that God grants everyone a genuine chance of his eschatological future in and through the person of Jesus Christ.[1128] Through the incarnation, the Son of God in a way has "united himself with each man" and through his life, passion, death and resurrection has opened up a way, so that when we follow this path, our life and death are made holy and they acquire new

[1128] Cf. Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, 17-18.

meaning (GS 22).[1129] Pope St. John Paul II also acknowledged that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is at work everywhere, even in other cultures and religions and he moves the hearts of the people towards true and good (RM 28).

Moreover, the Council, basing on Scripture and Tradition, declared that the Church is necessary for salvation and Christ is the one mediator and the way of salvation. Jesus himself asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5), for which the Church is the door, a teaching that also found affirmation in *Dominus Iesus* (no. 20). Kasper however, speaking about the relationship between faith and baptism, sees faith as leading to baptism, which is the highest form of its corporealisation.[1130] It follows therefore, knowing that God founded the Catholic Church through Christ considering it as necessary, one could not be saved if one "would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it" (LG 14).

Martin Luther rightly affirmed the necessity of belonging to the Church: "Therefore he who would find Christ must first find the Church. How should we know where Christ and his faith were, if we did not know where his believers are?... For outside of the Christian church there is no truth, no Christ, no salvation."[1131] The Council, on the other hand, also made it clear that even in other religions some positive values are found, describing them as preparation for the Gospel and light given by God. Hence it hoped that those who without blame, "do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church," or have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but yet sincerely seek God and his will, as it is known to them 'through the dictates of their conscience,' and who, with the help of grace, try to fulfil God's will in their actions, can hope for 'eternal salvation' (LG 16).

Ecclesia in Asia clearly defines salvation as a Trinitarian action in which the Father, the Son and the Spirit have their roles (EA 12). It further reiterated that to those who do not explicitly profess their faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour, salvation comes as a grace

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[1129] Cf. Guilherme Baraúna, ed., *Die Kirche in der Welt von Heute: Untersuchungen und Kommentare zur Pastoralkonstitution „Gaudium et Spes" des II. Vatikanischen Konzils* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1967); Cf. Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes and Inter Mirifica* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005). See specially section 1 of this book dealing on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, 3-90; Cf. Erin Brigham, *The Church in the Modern World: Fifty Years after Gaudium et Spes* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015).

[1130] Cf. Kasper, „Glaube und Taufe," 149.

[1131] Hans J. Hillerbrand and Helmut T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther's Works*, Sermons II, Vol. LII (Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 39-40.

from Jesus Christ through the communication of the Holy Spirit (EA 14). To this, *Dominus Iesus* further added that for those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church, salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material relationship. This grace is the grace of Christ, resulting from his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit (DI 20; RM 10). The salvific action of Jesus Christ, with and through his Spirit extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity (DI 12). Christ died for all and all men are called to one and the same divine destiny, and so we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery (GS 22). Finally, *Dominus Iesus* firmly holds these two truths: the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of the Church for this salvation.[1132]

5.2.3 *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*: A Problematic

At the very outset it must be made clear that the famous but often misunderstood and misinterpreted axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is not a New Testament dictum. But the Scripture makes it explicitly clear that there is salvation under no other name than Jesus Christ; that there is no other name given to us than Jesus by which we are saved (Acts 4:12; GS 10); that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man and that God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (1 Tim 2:4-7). This aspect of salvation in Jesus Christ is clearly highlighted and confirmed also by *Ecclesia in Asia* (nos. 12, 14 and 20). In the later theology of the Church Fathers, though Ignatius, Irenaeus, Origen and Cyprian of Carthage are said to have made use of this axiom, they however did not directly refer to the non-Christians, reprimanding them to join the Church. It rather served as an admonitory warning to the already baptised, who were on the verge of drifting away from their faith and the unity of the Church. Hence, it was a warning to Christians who preferred to remain outside the Church, and who were judged guilty of heresy and schism.[1133]

[1132] John Paul II, see Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 9; Cf. also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 846-847. Further, *Lumen Gentium* 48 also declares Church as the 'universal sacrament of salvation.'

[1133] Cf. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*? 23. Cf. also see Jan-Heiner Tück „*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," 242-267.

But unfortunately this axiom was misinterpreted in later theology. Pope Boniface VIII went to the extreme of applying this axiom to all who did not subject themselves to the Roman Pontiff as he wrote, "Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff."[1134] He declared that outside the Church there is neither salvation nor remission of sins. Later in 1442 the Council of Florence explicitly stated that unbelievers could not attain eternal life remaining outside the Catholic Church, unless before the end of their lives they are joined (*aggregate*) to it. "No one can be saved, no matter how much alms one has given, even if shedding one's blood for the name of Christ, unless one remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church."[1135]

Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (29 June, 1943) spoke of those who are oriented towards the Church, the mystical body of Christ, but with an unconscious desire for the Church (*votum*). The Pope further clarified the position of the Church that even these who are not baptised (due to invincible ignorance) are in danger of getting lost since, sacramental baptism is necessary to be a member of the Church and to attain salvation.[1136] The Letter of Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston on August 8, 1949 finally clarified the unfortunate controversy that arose from the misinterpreted axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[1137] This decisive letter declared that no one will be saved who, knowing that the Church has been established by Christ, either refuses to submit to the Church or denies obedience to the Vicar of Christ. To obtain salvation, it is not always necessary to be a member of the Church, but however, it is necessary that one is united to the Church by desire and longing.

Traditionally it was said '*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*' but today this expression is viewed more positively: 'The Church is necessary for salvation.' Modern theologians, as they came in constant contact with other religions discovered 'seeds of the Word' also in them, and later accepted that the Spirit of God is also present in other cultures and religions.

[1134] Cf. *Unam Sanctam*, Bull of Pope Boniface VIII promulgated on November 18, 1302.

[1135] Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, Chapter VIII, The Church, 309-310. See Decree for the Copts (1422), no 810,

[1136] See Rahner, "Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical '*Mystici Corporis Christi*," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. II, 1-88.

[1137] This Letter of Holy Office was directed to Leonard Feeney and the associates of St. Benedict Centre since they failed to rightly understand and examine this axiom concerning salvation and the controversy later became envenomed.

People belonging to other faiths, if and when they are saved, are saved by the Church to which they are related in a 'mysterious way.' *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (53) considers other religions as human arms outstretched towards heaven, but however, *Dominus Iesus* (22) asserts that they are 'objectively deficient' with regard to salvation. Members of other religions are saved in and through their religions, but Rahner with his notion of 'anonymous Christians' argues, that they are related to the Church in a mysterious way. Pope St. John Paul II in his general audience on May 31, 1995 had clearly explained that all salvation comes through Christ.[1138] He emphasised:

> Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all…. We must maintain that the way of salvation always passes through Christ, and therefore the Church and her missionaries have the task of making him known and loved in every time, place and culture. Apart from Christ there is no salvation.

Among the many questions pertaining to the issue of salvation, the one which needs urgent attention is the question concerning the salvation of those not belonging to the visible Church. What is the state of salvation of those many generations before and after Jesus Christ? What about those to whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ has never reached and therefore through no fault of their own, have never had the possibility of listening to and accepting the Christian message of salvation?[1139] Kasper opines that the task of the Church today and her theologians is to respond convincingly to the question of salvation, especially of the non-evangelised without giving up, on the one side, the conviction of the necessity of the baptism for salvation, and on the other, without succumbing to the doctrine of *massa damnata*.[1140] Richard McBrien, speaking of salvation optimism clearly asserts that "the human race is no longer seen as a *massa damnata* from whom a few are saved to manifest the glory and mercy of God, but as an essentially saved community from whom "a few may, by the exercise of their own free will, be lost."[1141]

[1138] http://www.catechism.cc/articles/All-Salvation-Comes-through-Christ.htm (accessed August 4, 2015). See also LG 16; GS 22; AG 7.

[1139] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 114.

[1140] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 114-115. Also see Joseph Ratzinger's article, „Kein Heil außerhalb der Kirche," in *Das neu Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*, Joseph Ratzinger (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1969), 339-361; Y. Congar, *The Wide World my Parish: Salvation and its Problems* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961); Walter Kern, *Außerhalb der Kirche kein Heil?* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1979).

[1141] Richard McBrien, "The Church (*Lumen Gentium*)," in *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*, ed. Adrian Hastings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 90. Karl Rahner also declared this theological axiom 'salvation optimism' as one of the significant contributions of Vatican II (but unfortunately gone

5.2.4 Salvation: What about Other Religions?

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, expressed positive statements and admiration for the non-Christian religions. He acknowledged all that is true and good practised in various non-Christian religions and their moral and spiritual values. However, concerning the non-Christian religions as regards their significance in the divine economy of salvation he stated:

> It is religion that determines our relationship with God, and the Catholic religion is the one that fully establishes that relationship: one that is genuine, true, unique; this is the religion that makes God our communion and our salvation. And the other religions? They are attempts, efforts, endeavors; they are arms raised towards Heaven to which they seek to arrive, but they are not a response to the gesture by which God has come to meet man. This gesture is Christianity, Catholic life.[1142]

It is said that the Pope closely followed the articles of the noted French theologian, Jean Daniélou with special attention and esteem. Readers also found striking similarities between the teachings of Paul VI in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and specially the article of Daniélou that appeared in *Etudes* in 1964. It must also be noted that gradually some Catholic theologians started making a distinction, describing the non-Christian religions as 'ordinary way of salvation,' and Christianity as the 'extraordinary way.'[1143] Pope St. John Paul II however, rejected the suggestion of considering the non-Christian religions as 'ordinary way' of salvation. Instead he affirmed that the "Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation (UR 3; AG 7)."[1144] It is Karl Rahner who claimed that with the Second Vatican Council the Church has entered a new stage of awareness and development: from being a European dominated reality into a world Church.[1145] The Second Vatican Council acknowledged

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unnoticed). More on this see Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. VI, trans. Karl-H. Kruger and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1969), 397.

[1142] Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church?* 185. See also *L`Osservatore Romano*, March 23, 1966, 1. Although Pope Paul VI esteems other non-Christian religions for the spiritual values found in them, however, he never keeps them both on an equal footing.

[1143] Cf. Heinz Robert Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions*, *QD* 14 (London: Burns and Oates, 1966).

[1144] Risto Jukko, *Trinity in Unity in Christian-Muslim Relations: The Work of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* (Netherlands: Brill Academic Pub, 2007), 211.

[1145] Cf. Karl Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XX, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981), 77-89.

plurality of religions and identified a positive view of other religions (LG 16; GS 22; DH 3).[1146]

Is Christianity the only religion through which salvation is attained? Is it not possible to attain salvation in other religions? Though Pope St. John Paul II recognised the spiritual gifts in other religions and appreciated the manifold gifts that God has bestowed in them, he made it clear that these spiritual gifts in no way diminish the unique role of Christ as the only mediator between God and man, who is at the centre of God's plan of salvation (RM 4, 6). Salvation, offered to all and always in Christ, is made available and accessible by the virtue of grace coming from Christ through the Holy Spirit which enables each person to attain it through his/her free co-operation (RM 8). He did not exclude the participated forms of mediation of different kinds but reminded that they acquire value and meaning only from Christ's own mediation and can never be seen as parallel or complementary to Christ's (RM. 5).

The affirmation that all salvation is from God in and through Christ encounters in India (Asia) another parallel affirmation which says that other religions also facilitate salvation or the divine-human encounter. Most Indian theologians generally agree that the believers of other religions are saved, not in spite of their religions, but in and through them. Questions like 'Who is Christ?' and 'What is his role in salvation, particularly salvation in other religions?' are questions to be answered not in abstract terms and in an *a priori* context, but rather, in the context of one's own experience of other religions. The International Theological Commission in a document on *Christianity and the World Religions*, while regarding other religions as 'ways of salvation' referred back to the various documents of the Second Vatican Council which deal with non-Christian religions and acknowledges them as rays of truth which illuminate all men (NA 2);[1147] recognising in them 'seeds of the Word' (AG 11); and finding in them "elements of

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[1146] Pope John Paul II, in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979) explicitly expressed his desire that the Catholic Church engages in dialogue with other religions of the world. He did stress some of the significant key elements in non-Christian religions especially the active presence of the Holy Spirit, seen above all in their practise of virtue, prayer and spirituality, posing a challenging question: "Does it not sometimes happen that the firm belief of the followers of the non-Christian religions - a belief that is also an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the mystical body – can make Christians ashamed of being often themselves so disposed to doubt concerning the truths revealed by God…" (RH 6).

[1147] Cf. Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, 132-224. In part III of this book, Cardinal Cassidy presents an overall view of the efforts by the Catholic Church in recent years in implementing the guidelies given by *Nostra Aetate* concerning dialogue with other religions.

truths, of grace and goodness not only in their hearts but also in the rites and customs of peoples, although all must be healed, elevated, and completed' (AG 9; LG 17). Whether the religions as such can have salvific value is a point that remains open."[1148]

Can we consider the clause 'positive appreciation of other religions' to mean that all religions are parallel or complementary ways to God or salvation? Though God's plan of salvation is one, Pope St. John Paul II, referring to those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church definitively states, "Salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation" (RM 10). The Church declares it once and for all that Christ is mysteriously at work in other religions and the salvific grace of God comes to all and especially to non-Christians 'in ways known to himself' (AG 7). Till date, theologians are trying to understand this aspect of salvation more fully.

Pope St. John Paul II categorically declared that "although participated forms of mediations of different kinds of degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his" (RM 5; DI 14; GS 45). Hence, it is clear that the Church is not to be regarded as one of the many ways to salvation besides other religions, and the clause 'seeds of the Word,' does not mean that other religions are parallel or complimentary ways, but are related to and ordained to the Church. Salvation has been fully accomplished in Jesus Christ but at the same time elements of this christological fullness is also shadowed in other religions in a fragmentary and temporary way.[1149] All good and truth found in other religions are considered by the Church as a 'preparation for the Gospel,' (*praeparatio evangelica*) given by God himself who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life (LG 16).

Certain questions still remain unanswered. To what extent has God manifested himself in other religions? How does God work in these different religions? How does the saving activity of Christ become effective especially in those who do not know him as yet? What

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[1148] Sharkey and Weinandy, ed., "Christianity and the World Religions (1997)," in *International Theological Commission*, Vol II, 173; Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions," 328.

[1149] Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 128.

is the role of the Church concerning the salvation of non-Christian religions? These serious questions are inter-related and are very important for the Church, co-existing in a pluralistic world of religions and cultures.[1150] To draw a very conclusive answer to these above raised questions however, is certainly a herculean task.

5.2.5 Walter Kasper: Salvation as Restoration of Relationships

Kasper deals with the question of salvation as the point of departure for the God-question. Referring back to the Church's profession of faith, in which the Creed after confessing God as the Father Almighty continues its confession in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,"[1151] Kasper formulates the fundamental creedal statement of Christianity as: "Christ became a human being 'for us men and for our salvation' (*propter nos et propter nostrum salutem*)."[1152] He certifies that God desires the salvation of all and he will work it out in such a way since, "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35).[1153]

Kasper acknowledges special theological problems caused by the historical phenomenon of Jesus of Nazareth and subsequent christological formulations. The question concerning the divinity of Jesus and the question concerning salvation in Christianity are on the top of the agenda. Kasper rightly questions, "Can one see the sign of the future of the world and the future of God in the crucified?"[1154] Key concepts of theology like God, grace and salvation have become banal and empty words, saying nothing to men and having no foundation in the realm of experience.[1155] Today, these theological concepts need to be probed in depth so as to make them meaningful and relevant to the modern world and for concrete practise of faith.

[1150] See Roman A. Siebenrock und Jan-Heiner Tück, ed., *Selig die Frieden stiften. Assisi – Zeichen gegen Gewalt* (Freigburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2012). This work contains a collection of standard theological articles from expert theologians, who have attempted to approach the Assisi event of prayer meetings for peace from different angles.

[1151] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 158.

[1152] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 73.

[1153] Cf. Kasper, „ Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 349.

[1154] Kasper, „Jesus im Streit der Meinungen," 239.

[1155] Cf. Kasper, *Methods of Dogmatic Theology*, 52-53.

Kasper begins with the biblical understanding of salvation, which means liberation.[1156] But he distinguishes between two further meanings of liberation. On the one hand, liberation means freedom from concrete situations like distress and affliction, from sickness and fear of death, from imprisonment, persecution, and suppression. On the other hand, liberation also means freedom, a freedom to which Jesus Christ has set us free (Gal 5:1, 13), freedom from law, sin and death. It is Christian freedom calling to love, to establish community with God, and to serve neighbours.[1157] Thus Kasper argues that Jesus, through his suffering and death on the cross and by his glorious resurrection is not only the bringer of peace, but he is 'peace in person.'

Kasper argues that if we take the universal character of the grace of Christ seriously, it is no longer possible to bring Christianity and the non-Christian religions into opposition with each other. It is not possible to characterise Christianity as the revelation of God 'from above' and the non-Christian religions as man's own attempts 'from below' to obtain power over God. He further questions, if it isever possible to understand man's movement toward transcendence 'from below,' which is found in the non-Christian religions with such rich diversity, if man is not first approached and called 'from above?' Man's movement towards transcendence is nothing but one's response of faith to a grace-filled call of God. If one takes seriously the will of God that all men should be saved, then one can, like Rahner, certainly speak of an implicit and anonymous Christianity. Further, Kasper reminds that in the diversity of rites and ideas there is only one religion, and refers to St. Augustine who once said, "the true religion has always been there, but only after the appearance of Christ was it called 'Christian.'"[1158]

Kasper sees the entire salvation history revolving around the mystery of the cross, the unbounded love of God and the sacrifices of Jesus to save and to unite humanity. The scandalous cross becomes the sign of glory and life. He puts it tersely, "This concrete human being, Jesus of Nazareth, therefore is the point at which the eschatological salvation also of each and every human being is decided."[1159] Basing his argument on

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[1156] Cf. Walter Kasper, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ, The Collected Works of Walter Kasper*, Vol. V, trans. Sr. Katherine Wolff (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 92-95.

[1157] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Das theologische Wesen des Menschen," in *Unser Wissen vom Menschen. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen anthropologischer Erkenntnisse?* ed. Walter Kasper (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1977), 111-112.

[1158] Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 160

[1159] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 197. Cf. also Lk 12:8f; Mk 8:38.

Incarnation theology, Kasper further argues that the possibility of any salvation required a new beginning, a person who would break through the situation by entering into it. God has accomplished this through Jesus Christ, the New Adam (Rom 5:12-21), who, through his incarnation has changed the situation of humanity. Through incarnation, each man has the possibility of becoming new and entering into a personal relationship with God. This personal encounter leads one to liberation and redemption. In the words of Kasper,

> With Christ's coming a new *kairos*, a new opportunity of salvation, is opened to the whole world and to all men. With him the situation of all has become a-new, because in the one humanity the existence of each and every one is determined by the existence of all. It is precisely in the body of Christ that salvation is personally exemplified and offered to us.[1160]

Kasper also makes a reference to objective redemption, whereby he means to say that salvation exists even before it could be appropriated. This concept of objective redemption should not be however misunderstood, as if Jesus Christ is imposing salvation on entire humanity. Kasper clarifies that God does not gather people in universal order of salvation. God's grace has set us free through Christ for freedom (Gal 5:1, 13) and it calls us for a choice/decision, for conversion, for faith, without which we cannot please God (Heb 11:6). God will justify everyone without distinction, Jews and Gentiles on the ground of faith (Rom 3:30). Hence, Kasper affirms that the question of salvation cannot be separated from the question of faith.[1161]

Personal faith in Jesus Christ, which is the quintessence of man's salvation, and a personal decision to live for him, are means through which salvation is appropriated. Salvation through Jesus Christ becomes a reality through concrete encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, leading to personal conversion, because salvation is possible only in the person of Jesus Christ. Kasper tries to identify "the saving truth of Christianity as the Gospel of Jesus the Christ… Jesus Christ is himself salvation, the kingdom of God in person, and through union in faith with him human beings come to share in God's own life as they await in hope the consummation of history."[1162]

[1160] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 205.

[1161] Cf. Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 352.

[1162] William P. Loewe, "Jesus the Christ in Retrospect and Prostect," in *Speaking Truth in Love: The Theology of Cardinal Walter Kasper*, ed. Colberg and Krieg, 92.

He further argues that "the non-Christian religions possess significance for salvation to the extent that they integrate themselves into the process of salvation history… They achieve their final unambiguity, clarity and universality only through Jesus Christ."[1163] To the question 'How is Jesus related to other religions? Kasper uses the Stoic expression *Logos spermatikos* (λόγος σπερματικός), the generative principle of the universe.[1164] Jesus (*logos*), through whom and in whom everything is created, is also present in other religions, affirming and fulfiling all that is good and beautiful in them. St. Augustine spoke of *ecclesia ab Abel*, (in other words '*ab Abel iusto*' which Thomas Aquinas adopted in many passages of his work)[1165] as he believed and accepted that God's goodness is present forever and is at work among all people, since the beginning of creation, so that, even the Gentiles had their hidden saints and prophets.[1166] Today the Spirit of Jesus Christ is actively present in them and we can, only through mutual dialogue, enrich each other, thus avoiding to exist as separate segments (Interview 1).

It is an established fact that even believers of other religions are saved by Christ, not in spite of their religions, but in and through them. What is the role of Christ in his saving act, in and through other religions? Kasper, besides using *logoi spermatikoi*,[1167] also refers to *semina Verbi* (seeds of the Word), used also by Second Vatican Council (AG 1, no. 11), affirming the universality of the Spirit of the *Logos*. Convinced of this truth, the Church today should continue seeking and identifying the *semina Verbi* present in the different religious traditions (Interview 2). But for Kasper, Jesus Christ at the same time, remains always unique and universal.

Kasper comprehensively articulates his understanding of the essence of salvation as an event of Christ, and that no other religion or culture can add to or surpass this Christian dispensation of salvation. Everything true and good that the other religions contain is

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[1163] Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 163. See also *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

[1164] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 316. Cf. also Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 350. St. Justin, struggling to construct a bridge between Greek philosophy and Christianity used this term, convinced that God has planted in each individual person a seed (*spermatikos*) of his own divinity (*Logos*).

[1165] See Max Seckler, *Das Heil in der Geschichte: Geschichtstheologisches Denken bei Thomas von Aquin* (München: Kösel, 1964), 220f.

[1166] Cf. Y Congar, „Ecclesia ab Abel," in *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Marcel Reding (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1952), 79-108. See also Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 117, 124.

[1167] Walter Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 350. Cf. also Henri de. Lubac, *Katholizismus als Gemeinschaft* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1943), 190f.

participation in what appeared in its fullness in Jesus Christ.[1168] According to him, the whole economy of salvation is one single mystery. Kasper sums up in one sentence: "through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit God is the salvation of man."[1169]

5.2.6 Michael Amaladoss: Salvation as Liberation and God-realisation

Amaladoss explains the mystery of salvation based on the *Advaita* model. *Advaita* (non-duality of *Atman* and *Brahman*) refers to true self (*Atman*) which is pure consciousness, and the highest reality, *Brahman*, which is also pure consciousness. Salvation/liberation is acquired through knowledge (*vidya*) of the identity of *Atman* and *Brahman*. He explains that though there is advaitic relationship between God and humans, humans are free to conform themselves to the divine will, an integration which human have to achieve. Amaladoss maintains that our unity with God in and through Jesus Christ is advaitic and this unites us advaitically with all others. He believes that the Eucharist takes this unity still further as it advaitically unites us with the cosmos, thus making salvation a "mystery of *cosmotheandric* communion,"[1170] but as mentioned earlier, in the words of Amaladoss, it is a "cosmic dance."[1171] Salvation, for Amaladoss, is an inner transformation through participation – "a *theosis*."[1172]

Speaking about salvation in Jesus, Amaladoss opines that the image of Jesus as *satyagrahi* (one who clings to the truth) places the idea of salvation on a personal, human-divine level. Salvation therefore, is not something that is automatically brought to effect by the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus but rather, a divine-human interaction marked by freedom on both sides.[1173] As mentioned earlier, many Christian theologians and believers see Jesus as the liberator.[1174] Basing on his life some have even preferred to opt for *karma marga* (the way of action) as Amaladoss clarifies,

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[1168] Cf. Kasper, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," 14-16.

[1169] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 270.

[1170] Amaladoss, "Theosis and Advaita: An Indian Approach to Salvation," 899. For more on Advaita by Amaladoss, read also pages 896-898 of this article. The word 'cosmotheandrism' was coined by Raimundo Panikkar and the concept cosmotheandric communion was also developed by him. Cf. Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 2010.

[1171] See Amaladoss, *The Dancing Cosmos*, 2003.

[1172] Amaladoss, "Theosis and Advaita," 901.

[1173] Cf. Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, 86-104.

[1174] Cf. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*; Kappen, ed., *Jesus Today*; M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*; Ryan, "An Indian Christology – A Discussion of Method," 212-227.

> Jesus identifies himself with the poor and the outcasts in order to struggle with them towards inner and outer freedom and wholeness. The salvation that Jesus brings is not merely other-worldly, but challenges us to a commitment to promote social development and liberation. Jesus offers not only a motivation for struggle, but also a model. First of all he sets the goal of development and liberation in the context of the Reign of God. Secondly, his struggle is non-violent. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus is the perfect *Satyagrahi*.[1175]

Thus the entire quest of liberation is directly proportionate to one's authentic search for God and its realisation. Such an image of Jesus Christ fits the Indian context appropriately and is very much required where injustice, inequality and discrimination are still prevailing.

When it comes to the Christian understanding of salvation, Amaladoss identifies two problems. On the one hand, if salvation is only reduced to the Paschal Mystery, then according to him, the whole historical-eschatological dimension loses its ground, as Wilfred also highlights. On the other hand, if Jesus is identified as the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, humanity and its limitations, the aspect of emptying himself etc. is forgotten. As a response to these possible difficulties, Amaladoss considers salvation as a mysteric process of God's continuing action in the world, reaching out to all human beings. He reiterates that only God can save and this God who is present and active in Jesus is also present and active through other saviour figures in other religions. Hence, other religions too, in which the Spirit of God is present and active, they neither being replaced nor excluded, contribute to the consummation.[1176] Consequently, Jesus Christ is the only saviour because he is God (or in so far he is God) and any *a priori* talk about the God-experience of others is not justified.[1177] What is then the role of a member of the Church? Amaladoss explains:

> A person becomes a member of the Church not merely to be saved, but because he is called to participate in the mission of the disciples of Jesus. It is a call to a service, a particular role in history – not an honour or a reason to feel superior. One is not saved

[1175] Amaladoss, "Images of Jesus in India," 10.

[1176] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 237-239.

[1177] Cf. Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 219, 220-221.

> 'more' or 'quicker' because one is Christian. The measure of salvation is the freedom and generosity of God.[1178]

Amaladoss is convinced when he asserts that God is really the saviour of all peoples and "when the early Church recognises Jesus as divine and worships him, it is precisely because he is recognised as the saviour and only God can save,"[1179] and not religions. Amaladoss repeats often that religions cannot save as they don't have the saving power, but people are saved in and through their religion which are only "ways of salvation."[1180] God is therefore, "not the God of particular people. His action is not limited to a particular historical and cultural tradition."[1181]

Amaladoss no doubt agrees that the Church is the sacrament of salvation since salvation is mediated by the Church. But to say that "salvation is mediated only by the Church, is a comparative statement that cannot be made *a priori* without taking into account other religions and their place in the plan of God."[1182] He also reminds us to resist the temptation of reducing "the universality of Christ to the universality of the visible, institutional Church."[1183]

God's universal saving will, he argues, is present and active everywhere through various ways, a plan progressively realised in history through the Word and Spirit. God's self-communication is taking place in the world through a great variety of symbolic mediations. Amaladoss is certain that "various religions, and even secular movements, are at the service of this plan of God for the world."[1184] The plan of God for humanity is one – to unite all men in freedom, justice and love, a new heaven and a new earth. "The Church" therefore, argues Amaladoss, "has no exclusive claims on the mystery, except that of being its witness and servant, both in life and proclamation. It does not offer easier

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[1178] Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 415-416.

[1179] Michael Amaladoss, "An Indian Christology: The Dialogue Continued," *VJTR* 63 (1999): 602.

[1180] Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission," 61.

[1181] Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 417.

[1182] Michael Amaladoss, "Is There An Asian Way of Doing Theology?" *EAPR* 45, no. 1 (2008): 22.

[1183] Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 418.

[1184] Michael Amaladoss, "Faith Meets Faith," *VJTR* 49, no. 3 (1985): 112.

or fuller salvation. God alone is the saviour present and active in the world in ways often unknown to us."[1185]

With the Second Vatican Council the Church has made some break-through by entering into a new era, acknowledging and appreciating the positive elements and experiences in other religions. These experiences, argues Amaladoss, should lead us to a new paradigm in theological reflections, as far as the history of salvation is concerned. To this effect, we need to re-interpret the old formulae, re-appropriating it in a new context and re-expressing it. He makes his position clear:

a) Salvation is a cosmic project that is working itself out in history according to the plan of God. Salvation is social and cosmic, not just saving of individual souls but the transformation of the whole world.
b) It is God who saves and his saving action is a process that will be completed only on the last day. Since God is one, there is only one divine plan which underlines and coordinates the different self-manifestations of God.
c) Jesus comes to carry out God's plan for the universe. This intervention of God in Jesus is not exclusive, though it is special, not excluding or replacing other ways. The belief in Jesus as the incarnate Word does not authorise one to universalise automatically the way of Jesus, making it the only way.
d) Chalcedon admonishes neither to separate nor to confuse the divine and the human in the incarnate Word. When interpreting such exclusive and universal statements about Jesus, one needs to ask whether such titles are given to Jesus in so far he is divine or in so far he is human. One cannot claim the unity of the 'person' to suppress the distinction of the 'natures'.[1186]
e) The Word of God became incarnate in history in Jesus for a particular purpose in the plan of God. This does not authorise one to say that Jesus is active everywhere and at all times.
f) "It is significant that the action of God in other religions is attributed to the Spirit. But this may also indicate a tendency which seeks to identify the action of Christ with what he does in the Church, leading to a conclusion that Christ acts directly in the Church, and he acts in other religions through his Spirit… The Word and the Spirit

[1185] Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission," 73.
[1186] Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 221-223.

are present and active in other religions, but the relationship of the other believers to the mystery of salvation is not mediated by the historical Jesus and his continuation in history, namely the Church."[1187]

g) Finally, the mission of the Church is not the communication of a creed but the sharing of experience of God's action in Jesus. According to Amaladoss, today the goal of a mission is the building of the Kingdom of God and this is a global, cosmic project. Other religions, cultures and believers are seen as collaborators rather than competitors. The real urgent task of the Church is to become credible witnesses to Jesus and to the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed.[1188]

How can we call Jesus as the universal Saviour of the world, especially "even of people who do not accept him in faith"[1189] and how can Jesus Christ save us all? Answering this difficulty even Amaladoss, like Kasper, uses the expression *semina Verbi* which the early Father of the Church had often referred to in trying to explain the role of Jesus and his saving act in other religions. Amaladoss explains:

a) There are 'seeds of the Word' in other religions which relate in some way to the Word made flesh. This suggestion goes back to Justin and Clement of Alexandria. "The other religions have only the 'seeds of the Word,' whereas the Church has the Word."[1190] But a practical difficulty arises when even other religions make similar absolute claims.

b) Focus on the mystery of Incarnation: By his incarnation the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with every human being (GS 22).

c) Through the aid of the Holy Spirit - "The Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" (GS 22).

d) A more traditional view which argues that "Jesus by his death has made satisfaction for all people. Therefore whoever is saved benefits by the saving death and resurrection of Jesus."[1191]

[1187] Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions," 335.

[1188] Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 225-226.

[1189] Amaladoss, "Theosis and Advaita," 887.

[1190] Amaladoss, "Faith Meets Faith,"110.

[1191] Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions," 329.

Amaladoss maintains that through the incarnation of Jesus, the whole humanity participates in the saving paschal mystery of Christ. Hence, every person is saved by Jesus Christ (in so far he is God), though salvation may be actually mediated even through other salvific figures.[1192]

If argued in this manner, a major problem could be foreseen. How can we concretely make people of other religions aware of this truth? Can we demonstrate that their religion is not true on the basis that their religious experiences are either from Jesus or from his Spirit, unconsciously lived? If so, are we not invalidating their capacity to facilitate divine-human encounter, depriving them of a positive role? If other religions are, for us, only human quests for God, or structures in which only some good and holy elements could be discovered and that they are called to find their fulfilment in Church and communities where Jesus Christ is active through his Spirit, Amaladoss seriously challenges the possibility of healthy discussion and dialogue.[1193]

5.2.7 Felix Wilfred: Salvation as Holistic Redemption

Wilfred sees a close relationship between Christology and soteriology, since for him soteriology is the very structure of Christology. He argues therefore,

> Christological pluralism implies, then, not only different images of Jesus Christ but also different understandings of salvation. In the New Testament it is so evident that Jesus is so inextricably linked to salvation from God. However, there is a plurality in the New Testament itself regarding what salvation consists in. It has to do a lot with the questions and issues with which people interpret Jesus Christ against their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds.[1194]

Salvation, argues Wilfred, cannot be inferred and understood *a priori* independent of one's integration in a particular history, culture, and society. He sees the questions of salvation more positively since he believes in the enrichment of the understanding of salvation and the mystery of Jesus Christ. His concept of the multiplicity of Soteriology is the outcome of belief in different worlds of experiences.

[1192] Cf. Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 219-220.
[1193] Cf. Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," 220-221.
[1194] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 89-90.

In the Indian context, the marginalised, the suffering, poverty-stricken etc. have found in the experience of Jesus and his life an understanding of salvation that can hardly fit into any classical Soteriology of atonement. Here lies the crux of the entire problem. Even Anselm attempted to respond to the contextual needs of his time by employing reasoning in Soteriology. Doing so, he tried to overcome the mythological explanation of redemption and at the same time responded to the unbelievers who found incarnation not in conformity with reason.[1195]

Wilfred rather goes to the root of the problem when he questions the inter-relatedness between Christ and other religions. He finds it meaningful to ascertain the approach people of other faiths have, to the mystery and the message of Jesus Christ. This is important because, according to him, the search for Christ is not an isolated action reserved only to the Christians, but it is often part of the spiritual quest of our neighbours of other faiths, and even their mysticism.[1196]

The conviction that salvation has to be viewed in the light of Jesus' entire life, teaching and approach to the people and to God, and that it cannot simply be confined to the death of Jesus, is gaining ground today in the Asian contextual experiences. Wilfred believes that "the historical Jesus bears in different ways the saving presence of God, which challenges any metaphysical explication of him as the necessary basis for the understanding of salvation."[1197] He further opines that we cannot ignore the non-Christian Christologies because they reiterate in a deeper way the significance of the historical Jesus, his life, his ministry and all the historical events in his life that point towards salvation. These crucial historical events in the life of Jesus have been sometimes neglected in traditional Soteriology. He believes that what is important today is one's communion with Jesus, especially in his identity as crucified and resurrected, and the implementing of his teachings in one's own personal life, which is going to bring about one's salvation.

It has to be acknowledged that Asian theological efforts show in a deeper way an integral understanding of salvation. Wilfred explains it further:

[1195] See Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 1970.

[1196] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 87.

[1197] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 90.

> It means the wellbeing of the whole person without any dichotomy of body and soul, and the welfare of all without the distinction of caste, class, religious belonging. Moving towards salvation implies progressive liberation from all that maims, corrodes or negates life in any form. It is freedom from whatever binds the self as much as the society and the world. Integral salvation and liberation imply that there are no two histories – one history of salvation and the other of the world moving on parallel lines.[1198]

Convinced of this, Wilfred finally asserts that there is one single history, one in which all the peoples share, beyond borders and boundaries, a history that testifies to the universality of God's grace and dealings.

Jesus' life and his teaching were centred on the Kingdom of God and the salvation promised by God to the poor, and for this reason the non-Christian understanding of Jesus Christ is indispensable today.[1199] In this connection Aloysius Pieris makes an interesting note. He distinguishes two categories of poor – poor by choice and poor by circumstances and most of the poor by circumstances are concentrated in non-Christian Asia. He says:

> The majority of the poor summoned by God to be *God's covenant partners* in the project of liberation are non-Christians… These are not rivals in a conversion race but partners in a common mission. Jesus, in whom the Triune God is convenanted with the poor, needs their collaboration to arrive *with them* at the fullness of Christhood. Jesus cannot be Christ without them.[1200]

Wilfred sums up his arguments. It is true that the understanding of the concept of salvation in Jesus Christ among non-Christian Christologies is in varying degrees. Jesus makes present the power of his divine salvation, integrating human life and universe,[1201] and it is interesting to note that the non-Christian approach to Jesus is more an encounter with him, not just an informative and intellectual quest.

[1198] Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology," 18.

[1199] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 89.

[1200] Aloysius Pieris, "Christ Beyond Dogma. Doing Christology in the Context of the Religions and the Poor," *Louvain Studies* 25 (2000), 207-208.

[1201] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 88. Also cf. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*; Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*.

5.3 Need for Dialogue: A non-Confrontational Communication

Dialogue, at present is seen in various forms and at different levels and a myriad of literature is available on this topic.[1202] Questions have been often asked whether a real, authentic dialogue is possible with the Church, a Church which claims to have the absolute truth? What then is the purpose of inter-religious dialogue? Why do we insist and organise such dialogues? What outcome are we expecting from such intense dialogues? Is an authentic dialogue, sharing and communication possible when each on the floor claims to possess the ultimate truth? Can we expect to dialogue with people of other faiths especially after *Dominus Iesus* affirming, that the Church of Jesus Christ is the Roman Catholic Church and Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man?

Dialogue with other religions should primarily aim to interpret faith traditions, revise their formulations if necessary, thus striving to enhance each other with enriching religious experiences. On the one hand, this sounds as a challenging enterprise, but on the other hand, according to comprehensive continental survey, it should be admitted that the Asian theologians, in general, have attempted such reformulations. They might not have been always successful but efforts for a visible Church unity are still on.

5.3.1 Magisterial Teachings and Guidelines

Pope Paul VI, during his Pontificate accomplished two major achievements that are relevant even today: he established the Secretariat for Non-Christians on May 19, 1964 and on August 6, 1964 published his first encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam*. Through both these events the Pope manifested his desire for the Catholic Church to engage in dialogue

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[1202] For more on Dialogue see Walter Kasper, ed., *Absolutheit des Christentums*, *QD* 79 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1977); Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. V, 115-134; Hans Waldenfels, *Begegnung der Religionen* (Bonn: Borengässer, 1990); Bertram Stubenrauch, *Dialogisches Dogma: Der christliche Auftrag zur interreligiösen Begegnung*, *QD* 158 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1995); Raymund Schwager, ed., *Relativierung der Wahrheit: Kontextuelle Christologie auf dem Prüfstand*, *QD* 170 (Feriburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1998); Hans Küng, *Spurensuche: Die Weltreligionen auf dem Weg* (München: Piper, 1999); Gerhard L. Müller, *Einzigkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi: Im Dialog mit den Religionen*, ed. Massimo Serretti (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2001); Joseph Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz: Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2003); Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligous Dialogue*; John M. Amankwah, *Dialogue: The Church and the Voice of the Other* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2007); Jacques Dupuis, *Unterwegs zu einer christlichen Theologie des religiösen Pluralismus* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verl., 2010).

with the other religions of the world.[1203] Promotion of dialogue, being the primary aim of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, was made explicit in its new title: "Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue."[1204]

Nostra Aetate, besides explicitly mentioning the pressing need of the Church for dialogue with Jews and Muslims, also briefly mentions the other Asian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, that seem to open new roads to faith and divine encounter. The document calls not only for dialogue but also for "collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life" (NA 2) and any discrimination because of religion, colour, race, condition of life, is seen as foreign to the mind of Christ (NA 5).

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), at their first General Assembly in Taipei in 1974 declared that evangelisation in Asia involves dialogue with the great religious traditions and the acknowledgement that they too are significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation, recognising in them and respecting profound spiritual and ethical meaning and values. "How then can we not give them reverence and honour?" the General Assembly questioned and, "how can we not acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them?"[1205] FABC also saw "evangelization as a threefold dialogue of the gospel with the many poor, the rich cultures, and the deep religions of Asia."[1206] For the Bishops of Asia, evangelisation was to proclaim the Good News of Jesus but the mode of proclamation, in the context of Asia,

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[1203] Cf. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 182-204.

[1204] The Secretariat received this title from Pope St. John Paul II in his apostolic constitution *Pastor bonus* of June 28, 1988. For more on dialogue see also documents: Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation on evangelisation in the modern world; Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue: *The Church and other religions – Dialogue and Mission* (1984); *Redemptoris Missio*, encyclical on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate (1990); Cf. Sharkel and Weinandy, ed., *International Theological Commission*, Vol. II. See chapter 19: *Christianity and the World Religions* (1997); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Dominus Iesus* (2000); Ernst Fürlinger ed., *Der Dialog muss weitergehen: Ausgewählte vatikanische Dokumente zum interreligiösen Dialog* (1964-2008) (Freiburg: Herder, 2009).

[1205] Statement of the Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Taipei, 1974: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia," nos. 14 and 15. For detailed explanation see Rosales and Arévalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. I, 14. See also *Redemptor Hominis* 6 and 12.

[1206] Cf. Amaladoss, "Is There An Asian Way of Doing Theology?" 21.

was seen as dialogical.[1207] Further, the FABC also clearly distinguishes pluralism from relativism:

> A pluralism which claims that all points of view of reality are of equal value surely ends in relativism… In other words, relativism holds that there are many truths which vary according to the subjects who hold different opinions of reality… The affirmation of plurality rests on the human search for an underlying unity that enables us to understand reality better. Many Asian philosophies and theologies have shown the unity and harmony behind pluralism.[1208]

FABC's Theological Advisory Committee published a set of Theses on Interreligious Dialogue. Accepting in other religions "significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation," it also maintained that "this positive appreciation is further rooted in the conviction of faith that God's plan of salvation for humanity is one and reaches out to all peoples… Dialogue is the only way in which this can be done, respectful both of God's presence and action and of the freedom of conscience of the believers of other religions" (cf. LG 10-12; *Ecclesiae Sanctae* 41-42; RH 11-12).[1209]

Acknowledging the historically rooted nature of Asian theologising, the Office of Theological Concerns (OTC) of FABC adds that "it's a method in which we learn to face conflicts and brokenness, a method we value as one of liberative integration, inter-relatedness and wholeness, a method that emphasizes symbolic approaches and expressions, and is marked by a preference for those at the periphery and 'outside the Gate' (Heb. 13:3)."[1210]

Such a positive approach and attitude to other religions and the belief that there is only one divine economy of salvation embracing everyone in the world, is taken for granted by the Asian Bishops. Indian Bishops maintain:

[1207] Cf. Rosales and Arévalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. I, 16; Michael Amaladoss, "Proclaiming the Gospel," *VJTR* 57 (1993): 29-30. For more on this threefold dialogue see Peter C. Phan, "Christian Mission In Asia: A New Way of Being Church," in *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 13-31.

[1208] Office of Theological Concerns of FABC, Document on "Methodology: Asian Christian Theology," 1.1. For the text see, Vimal Tirimanna, ed., *Sprouts of Theology from the Asian Soil: Collection of TAC and OTC Documents* (1987-2007) (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2007), 258-259.

[1209] See J. Gnanapiragasam and Felix Wilfred, ed., *Being Church in Asia* (Manila: Claretian Publications, 1994), 13.

[1210] Cf. Tirimanna, ed., *Sprouts of Theology from the Asian Soil*, 343.

> In the light of the universal salvific will and design of God, so emphatically affirmed in the New Testament witness, the Indian Christological approach seeks to avoid negative and exclusivist expressions… The implication of all this is that for hundreds of millions of our fellow human beings, salvation is seen as being channeled to them not in spite of but through and in their various socio-cultural and religious traditions. We cannot, then, deny *a priori* salvific role for these non-Christian religions.[1211]

Acknowledging the universal plan of God's salvation, Asians are trying to enter into relationship with peoples of other religious tradition and understand them. The first FABC Plenary Assembly however, acknowledged the positive relationship between Christianity and people of other faiths:

> In dialogue we accept them (the religions) as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognise and respect profound spiritual and ethical meaning and values. Over many centuries they have been the treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength… They have helped to give shape to the histories and cultures of our nations.[1212]

Though the Asian Bishops expressed their gladness that the Second Vatican Council affirms the presence of salvific values in other religions, they however asserted, that the primary task of the Church is to proclaim Jesus and his salvation through the proclamation of the Gospel. Hence the Church should be engaged not just in inviting and increasing her membership,[1213] but rather calling and encouraging people to have personal faith in Jesus Christ and celebrate salvation in and through him. The Church in Asian and the whole world direly needs this Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel that fulfils all hope.[1214]

[1211] Phan, "Responses of the Asian Episcopal Conferences to the *Lineamenta*," 22.

[1212] Rosales and Arévalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. I, 14.

[1213] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Hindu-Christian Encounter: Challenge and Problems," 191. For Amaladoss the goal of our mission and proclamation is to be at the service of the Kingdom of God.

[1214] Cf. FABC Papers No. 64. "Evangelization in Asia Today." The Statement of the FABC All-Asia Conference on Evangelization, August 24-31, 1988, Suwon, Korea. See no. 7, page 21.

Pope St. John Paul II encouraged such a positive approach to other religions and promoted the spirit of dialogue.[1215] His invitation to the leaders of other religions to come together at Assisi on two occasions, namely, on 27 October 1986 and on 24 January 2002 respectively, and to pray for peace in the world was a great move, that legitimised other religions as facilitators of divine-human encounter.[1216] He repeatedly asserted the urgent need of healthy dialogue, as a means to discover the universal plan of God for the salvation of the world. He duly acknowledged that the Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members but nevertheless, his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time (*Dominum et Vivificantem* 53). Further in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, he formally affirmed the presence and action of the Spirit in other religions and cultures.

One of the progressive documents by the Catholic Church on this subject 'Dialogue and Proclamation' from the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue makes it clear, that the belief that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Tim 2:4-6), and that in him fullness of revelation is given to us (No. 48), must be protected. This message must be proclaimed so that humanity may believe and be saved, a message which is indeed a necessary one, unique and irreplaceable (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 66). This exactly is the central problem which the Church in Asia, especially in India, is facing.

Ecclesia in Asia, defining dialogue as the essential part of the Church's mission, simultaneously acknowledges it as the "characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia" (EA 3), thereby categorically affirming the non-possibility of true evangelisation without explicitly proclaiming Jesus as Lord (EA 19). Julius Riyadi Darmaatmadji, Cardinal Archbishop Emeritus of Jakarta, responding to this affirmation added:

[1215] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *Walking Together: The Practise of Inter-religious Dialogue* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1992), 161.

[1216] See Walter Kasper, "*Nostra Aetate*: A Catholic Perspective," in *Nostra Aetate*, ed. Neville Lamdan and Alberto Melloni (Berlin: LIT, 2007), 203-206; Marcello Zago, "Day of Prayer for Peace," *Bulletin of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions* 22 (1987): 150. Also Fürlinger, ed., *Der Dialog muss weitergehen*, 118. During prayer it was observed that each one was deeply involved in this graceful gesture of supplication for peace. Cf. Pierre F. de Béthune, "The Bond of Peace: A Few Theological Reflections about Interreligious Prayer," *Pro Dialogo* 98, no. 2 (1998): 159-165.

> Yes, it is true that there is no authentic evangelization without announcing Jesus Christ, Saviour of the whole human race. But for Asia, there will be no complete evangelization unless there is dialogue with other religions and culture.[1217]

The exhortation also recognised the Church's sincere attempt to dialogue with other religious traditions, which should find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The Church indeed looks forward to the role of the Holy Spirit in preparing the people of Asia for the 'saving dialogue with the Saviour of all' (EA 18), and it is the Holy Spirit, who leads people into the absolute truth, makes possible 'a fruitful dialogue with the cultural and religious values of different peoples' (EA 21).[1218] The exhortation pleads to the Catholic community for a "sincere examination of conscience, the courage to seek reconciliation and a renewed commitment to dialogue" (EA 24). That the Church's approach to the other religions is and should be one of genuine respect; is the admonition from *Ecclesia in Asia*. And this respect is twofold: respect for man in the quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man (EA 20).

Dominus Iesus, on the one hand, makes it clear that "dialogue certainly does not replace, but rather accompanies the *missio ad gentes*, directed towards that "mystery of unity," from which "it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit"" (DI 2).[1219] On the other hand, it indeed points to the timeliness of the practise of dialogue between the Christian faith and other religious traditions and their practical difficulties, and confides that new questions are bound to arise, if one really seeks to understand the theoretical basis more deeply. As an attempt to answer such questions, it subsequently recommends to pursue new paths of research, advancing proposals, and suggesting ways of acting, that call for attentive discernment (DI 3). Furthermore, this declaration asserts that inter-religious dialogue is one of the actions of the Church in her mission *ad gentes* (DI 22).[1220] It reminds of equality, "a pre-supposition of inter-religious dialogue," referring rather "to

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[1217] Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 235.

[1218] Cf. also *Gaudium et Spes*, 22; *Redemptoris Missio*, 28.

[1219] Cf. Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 29; cf. also *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

[1220] Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 55; Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 31.

the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue," and "not to doctrinal content." It concludes:

> Indeed, the Church, guided by charity and respect for freedom, must be primarily committed to proclaiming to all people the truth definitively revealed by the Lord, and to announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the certainty of the universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ (DI 22).

Dominus Iesus considers the following notion false that the truth about God cannot be grasped and manifested in its totality and completeness by any historical religion, even by Christianity or by Jesus Christ (DI 6). According to it, "the Sacred Books of other religions, which direct and nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace, which are contained in those Sacred Books (no. 8)."[1221] It further asserts the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ (DI 5).

From the above discussions it is clear that the Church strongly recommends inter-religious dialogue as a means to unite all people in Jesus Christ. As mentioned earlier, the Church has to be faithful to the teaching of her Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming him as the unique saviour of the world. Proclamation and dialogue are seen as authentic forms of the one evangelising mission of the Church. They are to communicate the universal salvific plan of God for the whole world, a plan already begun in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

5.3.2 Walter Kasper: Christ-event as the Highpoint of Dialogue

Cardinal Walter Kasper, who was appointed on the staff of the Roman Curia as the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian unity (1999-2001) and who later as its President (2001-2010) was also instrumental in building harmonious relations

[1221] John, "Towards Indian Christology," 74.

with the Jews, reiterates the need for sincere and open dialogue.[1222] Kasper, in his address in England at St. Alban's Abbey (May 17, 2003) began by defining the present moment as one of ecumenical 'crisis,' "a situation where things are happening in the balance, where they are on a knife-edge."[1223] The 21st century, which he considers as a dark period, has one glimmer of light in the form of dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue or ecumenical dialogue, therefore, has the duty of recognising the major hurdles and obstacles concerning Church and religion, thereby re-establishing concrete and visible unity in the Church.[1224] According to Kasper,

> Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path towards human self-realisation… Dialogue therefore is not only dialogue by words and conversations; it is much more than a theological or academic exercise. Dialogue encompasses all dimensions of our being human; it implies a global, existential dimension and the human subject in his or her entirety. Dialogue is communication in a comprehensive sense and means ultimately living with one another and for each other… Today dialogue among cultures, religions and churches is a presupposition for peace in the world.[1225]

Kasper considers dialogue as a means to avoid misunderstandings and clashes, a presupposition for peace not only among churches, but also among cultures and religions. Here each respects the other as a partner, without trying to impose one's own ideology and interests. However, Kasper is clear that dialogue does not mean uniformity and universality of culture, extinguishing the existing identity of individual cultures. To him it

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[1222] For Kasper's reflections on Dialogue, cf. Walter Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 347-360; idem, „Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem II Vatikanischen Konzil," 262-277; idem, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 105-130; idem, „Religionsfreiheit als theologisches Problem," 210-229; idem, „Zum Dialog zwischen den Religionen und zur Geschichtlichkeit des religiösen Bekenntnisses," in *Freiheit der Religion. Christentum und Islam unter dem Anspruch der Menschenrechte*, ed. Johannes Schwartländer (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1993), 365-369; idem, „Kirche und Kultur: Evangelisierung und Inkulturation," in *Kirche und Theologie im kulturellen Dialog*, ed. Bernhard Fraling, Helmut Hoping, und Juan Carlos Scannone (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1994), 157-162; idem, „Einzigkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi," in *Die Weite des Mysteriums: Christliche Identität im Dialog*, ed. Klaus Krämer und Ansgar Paus (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2000), 146-157; idem, "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 4 (2000): 293-299; idem, „Ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe: Ökumenische Perspektiven der Zukunft," 217-238; idem, See foreword in George Augustin et al., *Christentum im Dialog: Perspektiven christlicher Identität in einer pluralen Gesellschaft* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2014), 11f; idem, „Das Zweite Vatikanum weiterdenken: Die apostolische Sukzession im Bishofsamt als ökumenisches Problem," *Kerygma und Dogma* 44 (1998): 207-218.

[1223] Walter Kasper, "Vision of Christian Unity for the Next Generation," *Origins* 12 (2003): 71-76. See specially 72.

[1224] Cf. Norman E. Thomas, ed., *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 280 -286.

[1225] Kasper, "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," 293.

is also evident that the western civilisation and culture cannot be considered as universal. The aim of dialogue then is, the unity of cultures, "where cultural identities are preserved and recognised, but also purified from inherent limits and enriched by intercultural exchange." Such unity-dialogue as the only way to peace and dialogue between churches, should "ensure that Church in a more efficient way be a sign and instrument of unity and peace in our world."[1226]

Kasper explains clearly that even revelation is a form of dialogue and hence "the highpoint of this dialogue is the Christ-event itself."[1227] He sees God's revelation as a dialogical process and the person of Jesus Christ as the highpoint of this dialogue. God is relational because he is love (1 Jn 4:8; 16) and hence dialogue means living in relation with him. This unique relation is possible in and through Jesus Christ, who is the fulfilment and fullness of dialogue, the absolute truth. Kasper therefore concludes that in Jesus Christ we can have this unique dialogue with God.[1228] He refers to this search of truth in dialogue which *Dignitatis Humane* clearly declared cannot be imposed by violence and nobody can be forced to act contrary to his conscience (DH 1). Further the declaration also states that:

> The search for truth, however, must be carried out in a manner that is appropriate to the dignity of the human person and his social nature, namely by free enquiry with the help of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue. It is by these means that men share with each other the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered in such a way that they help one another in the search for truth (DH 3).

Kasper basically mentions these two forms of dialogues – dialogue *ad intra* and dialogue *ad extra* but he opines that "dialogue *ad extra* presupposes dialogue *ad intra*, a readiness to reform and renewal."[1229] The Church should enter into dialogue, engaging herself not only with Scripture and Tradition but also with different ideologies, religions and

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[1226] See also article "Reflections by Card. Walter Kasper. Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue" in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc _ 200 30227_ecumenical-dialogue_en.html (accessed August 17, 2015).

[1227] Kasper, "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," 294.

[1228] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Die Kirche als Ort der Wahrheit," in *Kirche – Ort des Heils. Grundlagen-Fragen-Perspektiven*, ed. Walter Seidel (Würzburg: Echter, 1987), 110-111. In this article Kasper argues that the teaching of the Apostles is the real *gnosis* and hence the preaching of the Church is the 'rule of truth' according to the Church Fathers.

[1229] Kasper, "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," 297.

cultures. She should, on the one hand, study her internal life and on the other, the possibility of a positive theological encounter with different religions. It should be "a reciprocal event" with "mutual enrichment" and "deeper and richer understanding of mysticism and contemplation."[1230] Such encounters with other religions can pave the way to a profound awareness and experience of the mystery of Christ in us.

Concerning dialogue in Asia/India, Kasper proposes dialogue *ad extra* as fundamental in the Asian/Indian context – dialogue in Asia and dialogue with Asia.[1231] However, Kasper presupposes that in order to have such a dialogue with the others, we need to define our very own identity, which is the first condition. Hence, dialogue *ad intra* also plays a significant role. He further opines that we also need to have some basic knowledge as regards the background and the position of the other. Only then can we meaningfully seek some common topics, topics that are overlapping and intersecting. Such a process of discussion, clarification and understanding can certainly yield better results. Asians/Indians have a universal dimension, and a dialogue *ad extra* would be of great help (Interview 2). Kasper finds it important that the similarities are emphasised in an inter-religious dialogue, because they are the basic fundamental requirements for peace in the world.[1232]

Kasper, as mentioned earlier, strongly recommends the need for open and authentic dialogue today. What matters at the end, for him, is one's decision and one's faith. Even Western theologians have gradually realised that in a dialogue, there cannot be absolute unity, and it is not possible either. Dialogue is more a decision, rather than argumentation. It is more about defining one's self and at the same time recognising, understanding and respecting the other. Pope Francis, who is quite open, seems to be working in this direction and hopes for a better future and unity (Interview 2).[1233] Kasper's reflections on dialogue could be summarised as follows:

[1230] Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 166.

[1231] Kasper, acknowledging that since Asians are living in a pluralistic and globalised world, opines that they need to be very much depending on dialogue *ad extra*. He agrees that a similar situation as in Asia, is also presently growing is Europe. Pope Francis also wants that the Church moves more outside.

[1232] Cf. Kasper, „Religion und die Zukunft des Menschen," 309.

[1233] Cf. Walter Kasper, *Papst Franziskus - Revolution der Zärtlichkeit und der Liebe: Theologische Wurzeln und Pastorale Perspektiven* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Biblewerk, 2015); idem, „Die ökumenische Vision von Papst Franziskus," in *Freude an Gott: Auf dem Weg zu einem lebendigen Glauben*, ed. George Augustin und Markus Schulze (Freiburg im Breigau: Herder, 2015), 19-34.

a) Dialogue and mission are inter-related, since they do not exclude each other.

b) In a dialogue, one intends to impart one's belief to the other, paying unconditional respect to the other's freedom. Dialogue does not mean levelling, it is rather recognising of the other in his or her otherness.

c) Intercultural dialogue helps us to know more extensively the depth and dimensions of Jesus Christ.

d) Intercultural, interreligious, and ecumenical dialogue must be understood as a Spirit-guided spiritual process through which the Church gains insight into the once and for all revealed truth and advances towards a fuller understanding of the divine truth (DV 8). Dialogue can be an impulse for the development of Christian doctrine.

e) The dialogical nature of the Church is founded in her very nature as communion. It implies communion and communication with God through Jesus Christ within the Holy Spirit and later communion and communication among Christians themselves, and finally with others.

As top priority, Kasper proposes an authentic dialogue first of all within the Church herself. He opines that the Church, through such dialogues should overcome her one-sided monolithic structure and develop more communal, collegial and synodal structures.[1234] The Catholic Church also needs conversion and renewal (UR 5-8; *Ut unum sint*, 15 and 83), and she also needs dialogue and exchange of gifts with other churches and religious communities. Kasper is certain that dialogue, especially ecumenical, is essential for the identity and the catholicity of the Catholic Church herself. The question that Kasper finally poses is whether the Catholic Church through such dialogues, is ready and open for criticism and change.[1235]

No dialogue can achieve absolute unity, and therefore pluralism will always exist. Kasper acknowledges that plurality of religions is fruit of the richness of creation itself and of the manifold graces of God, and such pluralism is to be acknowledged as divine gift.[1236] In the words of Kasper, diversity is the expression of richness and fullness.[1237] As regards

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[1234] John Paul II in fact had extended an invitation to such brotherly dialogue in the new ecumenical situation in his *Ut unum sint*, 95.

[1235] The above reflections are from Kasper's article "Reflections by Card. Walter Kasper. Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue."

[1236] Cf. *Guidelines for Interreligious Dialogue*, No. 25 (New Delhi: CBCI Centre, 1989), 29. These guidelines were issued by the CBCI Commission for Dialogue and Ecumenism.

[1237] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 125.

dialogue, we have certainly not yet reached our final destiny but what we have achieved so far is not to be underestimated, and therefore, Kasper finds no reason in giving up our efforts as regards dialogue, mutual exchange and unity is concerned.

5.3.3 Michael Amaladoss: Dialogue as Conflict Resolution

Asians/Indians, are living is a world of religious pluralism.[1238] Religious pluralism, especially in India, became a factor of awareness only with the arrival of Muslims and Christianity. Later, pluralism became a problem because of the exclusivistic attitude of the prophetic religions, giving rise to religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism has in turn, given rise to conflicts, injustice, misunderstanding and discrimination. Amaladoss believes that inter-religious dialogue and inter-cultural dialogue have become today the need of the hour as aids to resolve such conflicts and discrimination.[1239]

At the very outset Amaladoss feels the need for dialoguing especially with popular religions, which could overcome conflicts and divisions, thereby transforming life and society. Amaladoss draws attention to the popular danger of studying and comparing systems rather than carrying on genuine dialogue. He opines that in such cases "dialogue becomes a formal discussion or conversation. One looks for official partners who are 'representatives.'"[1240] Popular religions are close to nature and it engages the entire person and God is not an abstract being. Hence Amaladoss opines that, dialoguing with

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[1238] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Theological Basis for Religious Pluralism," in *Communalism in India*, ed. S. Arulsamy (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1988), 115-138.

[1239] For more on Amaladoss and dialogue see Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New. Dialogue, Pluralism and Evangelization in Asia* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990); idem, *Beyond Dialogue. Pilgrims to the Absolute* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008); idem, "Culture and Dialogue," *International Review of Mission* 74 (1985): 169-177; idem, "Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence," *Internation Review of Mission* 75 (1986): 222 – 241; idem, "Inculturation and Dialogue," *Vatican II 20 Years Later* (Rome: Centre of Ignatian Spirituality, 1986): 151 – 176; idem, "Rationales for Dialogue with World Religions," *Origins* 19 (1990): 572 – 577; idem, "The Spirituality of Dialogue: An Indian Perspective," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 3, no. 1 (1993): 58 – 70; idem, "Inter-religious Dialogue: A View from Asia," *Landas* 8 (1994): 208 – 218; idem, *Dialogue at the Service of Life*. FABC Papers 72b (Hong Kong, FABC, 1995); idem, "Difficult Dialogue," *VJTR* 62 (1998): 567 – 579; idem, "An Indian Christology: The Dialogue Continued," *VJTR* 63 (1999): 600 – 602; idem, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Dialogue with Other Religions," in *Prophetic Dialogue: Challenges and Prospects in India*, ed. L. Stanislaus and Alwyn D'Souza (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 103 – 199; idem, "Peace and Inter-faith Dialogue," in *Political Governance in a Multi-Religious World* ed. Moses P. Manohar (Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 83 – 99; idem, "Dialogue between Religions in Asia Today," *EAPR* 42 (2005), 45 – 60; idem, "Evangelization as Dialogue," *Indian Theological Studies* 48 (2011): 34 – 49; idem, "A Call to Continuing Dialogue," *VJTR* 76 (2012): 734 – 748.

[1240] Amaladoss, *Walking Togethers*, 87.

popular religions would help in removing prejudices, encourage sharing of experiences, and promote understanding and collaboration in the common struggle for peace and justice.

The art of communication also plays a very significant role as far as inter-religious dialogue is concerned. Amaladoss opines:

> Negatively we should avoid, not only anything that might hurt other believers, but also stereotypes that reflect and create prejudices, generalizations, etc. Positively, a lot of information about other religions could be provided… A second kind of project would be to promote discussion between representatives of various religions on national moral and spiritual issues. Such discussions make people reflect, question their certainties, see other people's points of view and search for creative solutions enriched by a diversity of perspectives.[1241]

The Church is admonished to enter into dialogue with members of other faiths and inculturate its good tidings in different systems, settings and places. Further, through inter-religious dialogue, the Church is called to promote harmony and build peaceful communities. To the admonition of *Ecclesia in Asia* that the Church's approach to the other religions should be one of genuine respect for man (in the quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life), and respect for the action of the Spirit in man (EA 20), Amaladoss raises an important doubt. He questions that if the above proposal of *Ecclesia in Asia* is true of the Church, "what right does any one have to prejudice the extent and meaning of the activity of the Spirit in other religions?... Who can credibly show that Jesus (or the Church) actually fulfils the 'authentic values' of Hinduism, Buddhism or Confucianism? (Cf. EA 14)."[1242] He considers such reflections as *a priori* version of history.

Amaladoss, after a serious study, proposes different types of inter-religious dialogue, namely: dialogue of life and action, dialogue of intellectual exchange and experience, intra-personal dialogue and dialogue of reconciliation.[1243] He acknowledges the positive

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[1241] Amaladoss, *Walking Together*, 160-161.

[1242] Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 236.

[1243] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Jesuits in Inter-religious Dialogue in India." This article is the English translation of the German version that appeared in *Stimmen der Zeit*, 2 (2006): 57-67.

consequences of inter-religious dialogue which has resulted in developing theology of religions, on the one hand, and on the other, also given rise to Indian Christian theology. Such positive developments were possible because Indian (Asian) reflections start with concrete life situations and profound experiences and they tend to be holistic.

Amaladoss opines that living contact with the members of other religions, who are serious to their religious practises and commitment, results in appreciating other religions. This leads to a growing conviction that God's saving grace reaches out to the believers of other religions, not only in spite of them, but in and through them. The others are then seen as co-pilgrims towards God and God's Kingdom. Karl Rahner affirmed this *a priori* in his usual way, but the Indian theologians however, explain it *a posteriori*. This leads the Indian theologians to suggest that the Scriptures of other religions may be inspired by God in an analogical manner and that they can be used in our prayer and liturgy.[1244]

Amaladoss' christological thought pattern could be named as inclusivist-pluralist on the grounds of his argument that:

> In Indian Contextual Christologizing, no group has the monopoly over the person and over the message of Christ. The recognizing of revelation and the appropriation of Christ can only be tested in various contexts. And in the context of religious pluralism, a narrow exclusivist approach of Christology will be counterproductive.[1245]

Wilfred argues similarly when he maintains that the religious traditions reflect the saving presence of God and the activity of the Spirit, and hence what they say about the mystery of Jesus Christ is to be taken seriously and understood at the faith-level. He adds:

> These Christologies are not mere external additions and corollaries, but are to be viewed as expressions of the universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, which is not the monopoly of baptised Christians. These Christologies widen our mental horizons and provide a larger scope, and they consequently also allow us to see more clearly the limitations of the classical Christology and the formulations of the Council.[1246]

[1244] Cf. Amaladoss, "Jesuits in Inter-religious Dialogue in India," *StdZ* 2 (2006): 65.
[1245] John, "Towards Indian Christology," 74-75.
[1246] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 89.

However, Amaladoss identifies in such a scenario a concrete threat that undermines our faith in Christ as the unique saviour of the world. His reasonably argues that if Christianity allows people of other faiths to grow in their own conviction and commitment to their respective religions, will Christianity not be unfaithful and disloyal to its own religion and mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ as their saviour too?[1247] Is pluralism then not a threat to Christianity?

Describing inter-religious dialogue as conflict-resolution, Amaladoss suggests elements like conscientization, collaboration in action, and deepening of relationship, as some effective activities that can help such dialogues in the long term. Conscientization would help one to learn, understand, respect and accept the reasonableness of the other and thereby enable a personal transformation. Collaboration in action initiates building of multi-religious communities and groups that act together to promote equality and justice especially in the non-religious spheres, and finally, deepening of relationships and promoting of inter-religious harmony is possible through inter-religious prayer meetings.[1248]

One of the greatest problems in Asia in general, and in India in particular, is the problem of communalism and fundamentalism, where religion is used and abused for political milage. Amaladoss wishes that Christians collectively work together and enter into dialogue with other believers, acting as catalysts in bringing them together. He sees this action as God's special call for Christians in the present situation.

5.3.4 Felix Wilfred: Pluralism and Dialogue as Liberation

Theology, in the understanding of Felix Wilfred, is not simply the learning of faith-propositions or interpretations of the same.[1249] Conscious of this fact, he acknowledges that Asian theology follows a method of dialogue and mutuality which aims to communicate not simply the truths of faith, but such methodology is directed in

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[1247] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," 401.

[1248] For more on Amaladoss' ideas on dialogue as conflict resolution, see Amaladoss "Dialogue as Conflict Resolution. Creative Praxis," *VJTR* 63 (1999): 21-36.

[1249] Cf. Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 903. Wilfred is aware that the faith-propositions and doctrines are formulated from the source of the Scriptures and interpreted by tradition but this fact does not, evidently, make the Scriptures redundant.

dialoguing with the larger world. Asian methodology can be characterised as "dialogical and open-ended, experiential and transformation-oriented." He further adds that "the sources of Asian theologizing includes the religious traditions of the neighbours of other faiths, the riches of cultures as well as the new forces at work in the life of the Asian peoples."[1250] These elements have also been pointed out by the documents of the OTC of FABC. The OTC acknowledges the distinctive character of Asian theologizing as it declares:

> The Asian way of doing theology is historically rooted and concrete, a method in which we learn to face conflicts and brokenness, a method we value as one of liberative integration, inter-relatedness and wholeness, a method that emphasizes symbolic approaches and expressions, and is marked by a preference for those at the periphery and "outside the Gate" (Heb. 13:3).[1251]

Acknowledging the reality of religious pluralism in Asia and the need for open genuine dialogue and the challenges they invite, Wilfred begins his reflection affirming that the future of Asia lies to a great extent on the practise of authentic religious pluralism.[1252] Authentic religious pluralism demands the dispersing and redistribution of power, wealth and ideologies from central authorities to regional and local.[1253] In religious pluralism we acknowledge and respect the otherness of the other and the harmonious co-existence of diverse religious belief systems. According to Wilfred "pluralism is not simply a reaction to dogmatism, but something born of the realisation that the mystery of God is endless, and innumerable are the ways in which it comes to expression. Asian theologies celebrate this pluralism and have tried to understand Jesus Christ and the Christian faith from this perspective."[1254] Further, he maintains that, religious pluralism "positively recognises the

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[1250] Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology," 20.

[1251] Tirimanna, ed., *Sprouts of Theology from the Asian Soil*, 343.

[1252] For more on Wilfred's ideas concerning religious pluralism and dialogue, see Felix Wilfred, "Towards Liberative Social Sciences: Dialogues with Liberation Theology," in *Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods*, ed. Ananta Kumar Giri (United States: Lexington Books, 2004), 57 – 81; idem, "Liberating Dialogue: An Indian Perspective," *Dharma* 19, no. 3 (1994): 235 – 247; idem, "Dialogue and Mission in Context," *CTC Bulletin* 3, no. 3 (1989): 5 – 18; idem, "Dialogue Grasping for Breath? Towards New Frontiers in Inter-religious Dialogue," *VJTR* 51 (1987): 449 – 466.

[1253] Cf. Wilfred, *Sunset in the East*? 20.

[1254] Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology," 17.

value of other religions and believes that each of the religions has a unique contribution to make in the welfare of humanity and its future."[1255]

In a continent like Asia and in a country like India, where the issue of religious pluralism has become the core topic of discussion and serious concern, Wilfred asserts that inter-religious dialogue is today an absolute necessity, a religious and ethical imperative. He refers back to the orientations of FABC on dialogue as regards the Church and her mission.

> Dialogue frees the Church from becoming a self-centred community, and links it with people in all areas and dimensions of their life. In the view of the bishops, dialogue in Asia needs to be pursued in three inter-related spheres in particular: Asian *religions*, Asian *cultures*, and the immense multitude of the *poor*.[1256]

Wilfred identifies two types of dialogues: formal and informal. At the formal level, religion is considered as "knowledge and experience," and at the informal, as "practise, celebration ritual, etc."[1257] Acknowledging these two important methods in dialoguing, Wilfred also draws attention to the necessity of a politically-based dialogue among religions today in the Indian scenario, where religion is primarily seen as a social reality in the interplay with many other forces and factors, a social reality dealing with religious groups as units of powers. Referring to the issue of pluralism in Asia, Wilfred distinguishes three positions:

a) Asian pluralistic thought is nothing but an offshoot of the views held by some Western authors like John Hick, Paul Knitter, to name but a few. As a result Asians are seen parroting the current pluralistic Western thought, uncritically and unanalysed.
b) Asian theology, nourishing itself from its own Asian religio-cultural roots, has begun to wield influence on the churches in the West. There is an increasing number of people coming to the East from the West, enfeebled by the strong individualistic and consumerist culture (seeking relief in esoteric thought and practise).

[1255] Felix Wilfred, "Asian Religious Pluralism and Higher Education," *EAPR* 46, no. 1 (2009): 34.
[1256] Wilfred, *Sunset in the East?* 290.
[1257] Felix Wilfred, "Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Political Question," *VJTR* 60, no. 6 (1996): 361.

c) Western and Asian pluralistic thoughts, though with different backgrounds, nevertheless, reinforce each other to create a situation of overall relativism, which is viewed as the greatest danger facing the Church today.[1258]

However he clearly sees a distinguishing line between Asian and Western pluralism. Western pluralism, having its own particular historical and philosophical course, tries to create a rationalistic system of theology or philosophy of religions. This system of rationalising seems to be quite abstract from their concrete living context. Asian pluralism, unlike Western thinking, "has its roots in the concrete day-to-day life and experience of living with the neighbours of other faiths."[1259] Asian pluralism hence, is not to be understood as one of the forms of theoretical preoccupation, aiming to create a system out of the many existing religions.

Wilfred refers to one of the common complaints of our day. In our present world "great attention is paid to the practise of inculturation, dialogue, liberation, etc.," but at the same time "we have neglected the proclamation of Jesus, his person, his unique revelation and mediation."[1260] In the Indian perspective, however, he is confident that all these (inculturation, dialogue, liberation etc.) are means, and by practising them one comes to the recognition of the mystery of the person of Jesus.

In the light of religious pluralism, Wilfred poses a very challenging question: Should the followers of other religions (Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists etc.) break their existing spiritual journey in order to encounter the person of Jesus Christ, or can they experience and interpret him, remaining and progressing in their present voyage?[1261] This is not just a question posed by him but also a confident hope expressed, a hope of the union between divine and human, which the Asian churches are trying to realise.

According to Wilfred, it is not true that faith is at work only when Jesus is viewed as Christ. There is a faith in "trying to experience Jesus' message and in attempting to

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[1258] Cf. Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 904-905.
[1259] Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 905.
[1260] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 671.
[1261] Cf. Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 86.

follow his path (*imitatio Christi*)."[1262] He further argues about the inclusive character of the plan of God, the mystery of the Word, of Christ, and of the action of the Spirit. It is important that the non-Christian interpretations of Jesus are placed in this larger horizon. He says, "if we admit that religions themselves are sites where the mystery of the plan of God and Word and the Spirit are at work, then interpretations by non-Christians of Jesus Christ take us into new depths and to reassessment of classical Christology."[1263] Therefore, Wilfred reasonably argues that neither the historical person and the mysteries of Jesus can be controlled and supervised by the institutional Church, nor these christological formulations can be considered as normative for non-Christian Christologies. Wilfred further argues:

> If all the people in their diversity of cultures, traditions and religious paths participate in the single salvation, they all become partners in salvation and liberation. People of different religious traditions converge to experience and bear witness to the grace of God, and God's salvation. They engage themselves in bringing about ever greater freedom to the human family and for the protection and flourishing of nature and all of God's creation. Religious traditions are not opposed to each other but are partners in the project of God's salvation and liberation.[1264]

Does the acknowledging of religious pluralism and dialogue mean the dilution of one's identity as Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu? Wilfred argues for the contrary. He believes that "we become more Christian and understand what we believe and practise more deeply when we see ourselves in relationship with peoples of other faiths… The close association with other religious traditions can help purify our faith and enable us to see what is more important and what is secondary in our religious practises. In this way, religious pluralism deepens our faith."[1265]

Wilfred believes that Christian theology has much to draw from the resources of popular religions and the role it has played in the history of the Asian nations. He maintains, "Popular religion cuts across religious barriers and draws together believers of different

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[1262] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 88.

[1263] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 88.

[1264] Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology," 20.

[1265] Cf. Wilfred, "Asian Religious Pluralism and Higher Education," 36.

faiths in a common quest for the sacred."[1266] One should not forget the fact that even in the Old Testament Israel had to face the question of the various gods of the neighbouring peoples and likewise later, Christianity had to confront the Greco-Roman popular god and religious practises.

Finally, speaking of dialogue and religious pluralism, Wilfred advises that "we should not limit ourselves only to major religious traditions. There are numerous primeval religions among the tribal and indigenous peoples of Asia. They are very important today, especially because of their close connection with nature and their cosmic vision."[1267] He acknowledges pluralism as the best and crucial system because it "allows the voices of the weaker ones to be heard as they encounter and express the mystery of Jesus Christ in their lives and struggles."[1268]

5.3.5 Jesus Christ and Interreligious Dialogue: Practical Difficulties in India

The Indian Theological Association in a Statement (April 1998) addressing the Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India, at the very outset admitted that for Christians Jesus Christ, no doubt, is the perfect symbol of God who brings fulfilment to all persons through his words, signs and wonders. It added further:

> He (Jesus) is unique to the Christian in that he is the definitive, though not non-exhaustive symbol of God-experience in the world. But Jesus' uniqueness does not necessarily displace symbols in other religions… The vision of all the saving movement in the world as manifestations of the one divine mystery, of the one Word and the one Spirit of God, urges us to be open to the religious experience of others and to dialogue with them.[1269]

As the Church is living in the midst of millions of people belonging to different religions and faith-confessions, dialogue (interreligious dialogue) has today become the primary

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[1266] Wilfred, "Popular Religion and Asian Contextual Theologizing," in *Popular Religion, Liberation and Contextual Theology*, ed. Jacques van Niewenhove and Berma Klein Goldewijik (Kampen: Kok, 1991), 151.

[1267] Cf. Wilfred, "Asian Religious Pluralism and Higher Education," 35.

[1268] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 91-92.

[1269] Amaladoss, "The Images of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 235-236.

concern of the Church. "Interreligious dialogue is a true expression of the Church's evangelizing action in which the mystery of Jesus Christ is operative, calling us all to conversion to him who is the fullness of truth and revelation."[1270] Wilfred argues that if God's revelation is his self-communication to us, his creation, we too become part of the framework in which revelation takes place. He adds: "Revelation is co-related to the reality of faith (*fides qua creditor*). Not only the self-communication of God as revelation is a pure grace; but even our response to revelation in faith is itself a grace of God and the working of the Spirit."[1271] A frequent question asked is: How are we to consider the revelation of God in other religions and the divine-human encounter, as a response to God's communication? It has always been answered with the idiom, "in ways known to God." Indian theologians are still intensely engaged in answering this question.

Wilfred rightly identifies a great difference between the concept of religion in Asia and that in the West. Religion in Asia, as mentioned earlier, is not just viewed as a set of beliefs or doctrines, but more as a way of life, a path, a journey. Religion is embedded in the culture and daily life of the people. There exist no '"walls of separation' between religion and public life."[1272] Therefore, he rightly expresses: "Service unites, doctrine divides."[1273] India is experiencing this situation at a deeper level because of its increasing poverty and its corresponding need for dependency, because of communalism and fundamentalism. Taking up the issue of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his universal salvation in any form of dialogue (inter-religious or inter-cultural) appears to be a risk.

Wilfred explains this Euro-Asian or Rome-Asian thinking pattern in a more positive way. It appears that Rome holds on to an explicit preaching of the Gospel, baptism and conversion, but Asian/Indian bishops and the Asian/Indian Christians, from experience, have been asserting that silent witnessing is the most effective approach in the continent. In other words, "while Roman documents laid stress on preaching Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, Asian Churches focused on following the path of historical Jesus in his commitment to the poor, in his spirit of dialogue and in his way of life of reaching out to

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[1270] Cf. Discovering the Face of Jesus in Asia Today: A Guide to doing Mission in Asia, FABC Papers, No. 84, 15.

[1271] Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 901-902.

[1272] Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology," 33.

[1273] Wilfred, "Ecumenism as a Movement of Justice," 573.

the other."[1274] This particular *modus operandi* was seen as being most effective and adequate, in gaining a deeper understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ. In doing so, the Church does not seek triumphalism and self-righteousness. Instead, she is groping and struggling with the rest of humanity,[1275] and it has its own weakness among its members (GS 43).

Amaladoss explains this difference in East/West thinking patter by using the analogy of a human brain. A human brain, science reveals, has two halves: left and right. "The left brain is supposed to be the seat of abstract, conceptual and rational thought. The right brain, on the other hand, animates imaginative and emotional intelligence through images and symbols."[1276] According to cultural anthropologists, Euro-Americas have developed their left brain more than the right, and the Asians, in contrast, have developed their right brain more than the left.

Rahner, speaking about Christianity and non-Christian religions refers to one of the prominent thesis pertaining to Christian faith and the theological understandings of other religions. This often misunderstood thesis states that, "Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognise any other religion beside itself as of equal right. This proposition is self-evident and basic for Christianity's understanding of itself." [1277] Many, who subscribe to this thesis opine, that such absolutism forces one to accept Christianity as the only legitimate and demanding religion for them. Such a teaching concerning the absoluteness of Christianity might never find acceptance in the Indian multi-religious context.

Kasper identifies a significant problem when he speaks of Christianity as an absolute religion. He opines that the confession 'Jesus is the only saviour of the world' is an exclusive and universal confession for the Church. Such universal and exclusive claims, Kasper believes, could make it rather difficult for the understanding of Christianity as "a

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[1274] Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multireligious Continent," *CONC* 3 (2012): 117-118.

[1275] Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Asian Christianity and Modernity: Forty Years after Vatican II," *EAPR* 42 (2005): 191 – 206.

[1276] Cf. Amaladoss, "Is There An Asian Way of Doing Theology?" 17.

[1277] Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in *Christianity and Other Religions*, ed. John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001), 22-23.

religion besides other religions."[1278] If Christianity in India considers itself as the absolute religions, dialogue is going to be more difficult and problematic. Majority of the Christians in India are Dalits (oppressed cast) or tribals. Many have become Christian probably to escape the financial and social oppression by the rich Hindus. Besides, Hindus look at Christians with suspicion, believing that Christians have a hidden agenda of proclaiming Jesus and converting people into Christianity.

Uniqueness and universal salvation in Jesus Christ, a fundamental Christian affirmation, in many cases has been proved to be an obstacle and impediment while dialoguing with members of other faiths. In the Indian context, a Christian theologian has two conventional approaches before him. Either he has to sacrifice his individual views and positions, his claims and faith tenets, or he has to conceal his own faith in the uniqueness and universal salvation in Jesus and thereby regard other religions and their saviour figures, their roles and status, as parallel and equal with Christ. He has to either confront or strike a compromise. In a genuine dialogue however, which is possible only between persons committed to their respective faith beliefs, committed statements of one's faith need not and should not be a barrier.[1279] There is no need to hide the essence of one's faith. Moreover, a Christian theologian has to articulate his faith in Jesus Christ and universal salvation in him, because according to Kasper and many other Christian theologians, it is the fundamental and central belief on which Christianity stands or falls.

One of the crucial problems in India, as far as dialogue is concerned, has been concretely highlighted by Wilfred, who affirms that meetings, dialogue and communication among various faiths appear to be indispensable for peace and unity among the various groups of people. The crux of the problem however, is that dialogue pursued today has been a meeting of religions at a *macro* level – meetings of religions as systems and institutions and discussions on their respective doctrinal tenets (formal level). He argues that such *macro* dialogues at the level of religious elites do not really respond to the challenges of creating a community in the face of conflicts and divisions. He proposes a dialogue of life (informal), a sharing in day-to-day life by the people of various faiths living together in a

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[1278] Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 350. Cf. also Walter Kasper, "Absolutheitsanspruch des Christentums," in *Sacramentum Mundi* I. *Abendland bis Existenz*, ed. Karl Rahner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1967), 39-44.

[1279] Cf. J. Kuttianimattathil, *Practise and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1995), 108.

society, and believes that such a dialogue of life is possible when dialogue becomes a meeting at the level of popular religion, especially, the rituals, festivals, worship.[1280] Asian Bishops have expressly spoken about this difficulty concerning dialogue. They are right in saying:

> Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, but in the Asia, before stressing that Jesus Christ is the Truth, we must search much more deeply into how he is the Way and the Life. If we stress too much that, "Jesus Christ is the One and Only Saviour," we can have no dialogue, common living, or solidarity with other religions. The Church, learning from the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ, should be humble and open its heart to other religions to deepen its understanding of the Mystery of Christ.[1281]

Most Indian theologians affirm that all salvation, however understood, is from God, in and through Jesus Christ.[1282] Amaladoss also contends that God is the saviour in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, and in relation to the Church. Religions are, in his opinion, the facilitators of the saving encounter of God with the humans and this brings him to conclude that as a matter of fact, religions do not save; only God does.[1283] As mentioned earlier, according to him, Christians, moved by the Spirit, acquire salvation through Jesus, and the same Spirit enables people of other faiths to acquire 'salvation-in-Christ,' but the working of the Spirit in this case is through other symbols and figures. Acknowledging this pluralism and a certain positive role of other religions in God's plan of salvation, Amaladoss opines, should not, and in fact does not, amount to the "denial of the uniqueness of the source of our faith affirmation relating the salvation of all to what God has done in Jesus Christ."[1284] However, Kasper wouldn't agree with juxtaposing of these other symbols and figures with Jesus Christ, since though these mediations for Kasper, are participated and also real, they are definitely not parallel (Interview 2).

Kasper reiterates the ideology of the Second Vatican Council which provided a wide scope of historical perspectives within theology, a greater scope of freedom within the

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[1280] Cf. Wilfred, "Popular Religion and Asian Contextual Theologising," 151.

[1281] This was the response of the Japanese Bishops' Conferences to the *Lineamenta* of the Asian Synod. See also Phan, ed., *The Asian Synod: Text and Commentaries*, 30.

[1282] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religion," 328.

[1283] Cf. Amaladoss, "Theosis and Advaita," 901.

[1284] Amaladoss, "Other Religions and the Salvific Mystery of Christ," 19. Pope St. John Paul II, as mentioned earlier, qualifies other religions as real but considers them as participated mediations, and the one salvific mystery of Jesus Christ is operative among people in different ways.

Church and a definite assertion of the possibility and the necessity of pluralism in theology. The Church therefore is more open, more dynamic and more catholic,[1285] acknowledging and respecting at the same time, religious pluralism. Amaladoss elaborates Kasper's ideology when he articulates that we (the Church in India) need to be open and receptive to God's manifestation in other religions and in other ways. The universal Church believes interreligious dialogue to be part of the Church's evangelising mission, rather than just considering it as a means of fostering and enriching mutual knowledge (EA 31).[1286] On the one hand, the Church in India, based on universal teachings, somehow has been attempting to manifest and reveal that Jesus Christ is truly the *concretum universale*, a truth to be defended and protected. In the bargain, theologians on the other hand, are facing practical difficulties because in a country like India, a cradle of world religions, this is a herculean, challenging task. Often theologians have experienced refusal and non-acceptance because such doctrines and ideals are considered incompatible in the Indian religious scenario. Christian faith and such doctrinal teachings are easily and often confronted and questioned.

5.4 An attempt to Design Pedagogy or Working Principles

From the preceding discussions and arguments concerning the universality and the unique mediation of Jesus Christ especially in the Asian/Indian context, the role of other religions in procuring salvation, and finally the need of promoting healthy dialogue, certain distinct and characteristic positions (Western/Asian) have been considered and clarified. In this concluding segment, an attempt is made to respond to the call of *Ecclesia in Asia* which recommends the need of following a pedagogy, which would introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery of Jesus Christ (EA 20). Here are a few of them.

5.4.1 Universal Salvation in Jesus Christ

Ecclesia in Asia, at the very outset, clearly affirms a glaring difference between the initial evangelisation of the non-Christians and the present methods applied in proclaming Jesus

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[1285] Cf. Kasper, *Method of Dogmatic Theology*, 20, 24-25.

[1286] Sebastian Athappilly, *Jesus Christ, the Saviour: One of the Many…*? (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2013), 122.

to believers, which certainly has to take a different approach (EA 20). The initial proclamation of Jesus Christ could be seen "as the fulfilment of the yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples."[1287] The Exhortation believes that an effective proclamation of Jesus Christ today could be done by narrating the story of Jesus as the Gospels do. A serious question concerning the ontological notions of the mysteries of Jesus Christ arises. Are these mysteries to be presupposed during the narration or are they to be completely omitted? Are they to be rationally formulated while presenting them, so that they acquire an appealing outlook and are gladly received? The Church, therefore, is rightly reminded to be "open to the new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia." It is suggested that the catechesis should follow "an evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching."[1288]

God's project of reconciliation and salvation, any Catholic theologian would argue, cannot be envisaged without the concerte historical person of Jesus Christ, his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection. Jesus therefore, becomes the 'efficient cause,' through whom reconciliation and salvation is accomplished. It could be hence concluded, that any plan of salvation, without Jesus Christ and the mysteries of his life, is inconceivable and infeasible for the Church.

The International Theological Commission makes a very significant observation. It clearly states that, although salvation is God's gift to humanity and is obtained through Christ, it however, requires human response and acceptance. The Commission states:

> Salvation is obtained through the gift of God in Christ, but not without human response and acceptance. The religions can also help the human response, insofar as they impel man to seek God, to act in accord with his conscience, to live a good life (cf. LG 16; and also *Veritatis splendour*, 94)… The search for the good… is the human response to the divine invitation, which is always received in and through Christ… The religions can therefore be… means helping the salvation of their followers, but they cannot be

[1287] Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops *Relatio post disceptationem*, 15.

[1288] Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*: *L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April, 1998), 15.

compared to the function that the Church realises for the salvation of Christians and those who are not.[1289]

When one has a comprehensive look at the Asian/Indian socio-religious scenario, it is obvious that the person of Jesus, his life and message, the truth and the freedom that he lived, have undoubtedly made a great impact, drawing millions towards him. Wilfred therefore argues that when people are naturally drawn towards this historical Jesus, it is not necessary for the Church to have recourse to the language of uniqueness.[1290] The churches in Asia should be clear that her mission and commitment to Jesus Christ is not something that is inherited from Western Christianity, something to be always imitated. Although, Amaladoss and Wilfred may argue that the use of the language of uniqueness and universality is not required in the Indian context, the fact, however, that Jesus is unique and universal remains neither unimpaired nor untarnished. This truth can neither be ignored nor supressed just because some are not able to comprehend the unique person of Jesus Christ and his universal mediation.

The co-existence of other religions and different experiences with them should lead Christians in India to discover and affirm the cosmic dimension of the mysterious presence of Jesus Christ, and thereby respect other religions. Salvation should be seen as holistic, cosmic and universal, a process of gathering of all things in God's Kingdom, a blissful state where God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). In the words of Kasper, salvation is the liberation from the present state of alienation ('sin' or '*hamartia*') and the integrity of human existence in and with the world.[1291]

To all those who are engaged in doing Contextual Christology, Amaladoss throws a challenge asking them "to avoid traditional representation (images) of Jesus and to look for fresh insights and create new images in their given cultural contexts, so that the witnessing of the reign of God becomes the way of the Indian disciples of Christ."[1292] This call of Amaladoss is to be welcomed since it invites for a personal approach to the person of Jesus Christ. Further, to seriously foster the communitarian dimension of

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[1289] Sharkey and Weinandy, ed., *International Theological Commission*, Vol. II, 174.

[1290] Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 671.

[1291] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 203, 205.

[1292] John, "Towards Indian Christology," 76.

humankind, Wilfred's proposal of the need to practise reverse or incoming universality by Asian Church, would also be of great help. He explains:

> In its early days, Christianity allowed its sacred books to be translated into all languages, which is recognition of the universality of the human family. Then, Christianity sent out missionaries to the entire world – again recognition of the universality of humanity. But these two forms of universality are incomplete. Christianity needs to allow itself to be interpreted and reshaped by what these peoples with their cultures and religious traditions have to say about humanity and human destiny. As long as this reverse universality or incoming universality, in contrast to outgoing universality, does not happen, Christianity is only a semi-universal religion, and incomplete… If the outgoing universality is from God; so is the incoming universality for which Christianity needs to make room.[1293]

The Church in India has to effectively and convincingly proclaim the truth that Jesus is not only the redeemer of humanity, but also its ultimate redemption. Furthermore, she should enable the world and humanity to concretely experience the redemption brought by Jesus. Kasper clearly affirms that God has made Christ our redeemer (1 Cor 1:30), and Jesus Christ, now being our redeemer, cannot be separated from the cross and the redemption that he brings to humanity. Therefore, Kasper opines that Jesus Christ should be made present today through concrete encounters, conversations, and living communion with human beings who are touched by Jesus.[1294] Salvation, for Kasper is therefore, as mentioned earlier, the redemption of the entire human person/being, liberating him "from the alienations of his former existence to a new freedom, not *from* the body and *from* the world, but *in* the body and *in* the world."[1295] The law of Christ (Gal 6:2), maintains Kasper, is also a law of liberty (James 1:25), is one of Christian freedom, which is concretely actualised in the glorification of God and in the service of love.[1296]

Shalom (peace) is the embodiment of that salvation, promised to our fathers of old, and realised by Jesus. Kasper boldly asserts that Jesus, through his sufferings, has become the

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[1293] Felix Wilfred, "Christianity and Religious Cosmopolitanism: Towards Reverse Universality," *CONC* 1 (2007):115. Wilfred supposes that dogmatism could be one of the major hindrances in implementing such incoming universality.

[1294] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 205, 207.

[1295] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 207.

[1296] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Autonomie und Theonomie: Zur Ortsbestimmung des Christentums in der modernen Welt," in *Anspruch der Wirklichkeit und christlicher Glaube: Probleme und Wege theologischer Ethik heute*, ed. Helmut Weber und Dietmar Mieth (Düsseldorg: Patmos, 1980), 41.

author of salvation and is the answer to the question about human suffering and human being.[1297] His obedience, his availability for God and for others, is the actual way in which salvation exists in history. Hence, salvation for Kasper is participation in the life of God in the Holy Spirit through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself is the salvation, filled with the Holy Spirit, in whose plenitude we share.[1298] Teaching people to participate in the life of God and in his Spirit given to the world through the resurrection of Christ could enable one to understand and experience the unique saving power of God in Jesus Christ.

Salvation, redemption, and atonement won by Jesus become personal when there is reconciliation between God and humans, and the death and resurrection of Jesus is seen as achieving this reconciliation in some way for all peoples.[1299] Amaladoss' proposal of reconciliation and holistic salvation, salvation of the entire cosmos, community and the whole human race, could be at the moment a feasible design. Accordingly, we need to:

> See the work of salvation as an ongoing, cosmic process according to God's plan… We Christians have no claim to exclusivity… Baptism is not a passport to personal salvation but a call to discipleship and eschatological mission… Salvation, understood in this manner, is not a project of saving individual souls from the fire of hell. It is a cosmic process of reconciliation that embraces the whole of human history, leading all things to unity."[1300]

Amaladoss opines that such a holistic salvation is liberation for the whole human person-in-community, which should also reach out to transform the cosmos. It heals and transforms all the structures of person and community life, namely, socio-economic, political, cultural and religious.[1301] Further, the Church in India should not underestimate the kenotic dimension of Christ's universal salvation. Salvation is God's own mission which he accomplishes through the sending of the Word and the Spirit, in and through Jesus, especially though Jesus' obedience. "The Word that personally becomes human in Jesus," Amaladoss reiterates, "does not come in power to dominate and eliminate the

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[1297] Cf. Kasper, „Das Kreuz als Offenbarung der Liebe Gottes," 14.

[1298] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 215-225, 245-268.

[1299] Cf. Amaladoss, "Who Do You Say that I Am?" 786.

[1300] Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions," 336.

[1301] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Evangelization in Asia: A New Focus?" *EAPR* 23, no. 4 (1986); 441-442.

other divine manifestations, but in a kenotic way to serve, to encourage, to enable, to collaborate with."[1302]

One of the major concerns of Christianity in India is to bring the absolute truth of salvation to all men. In realising this end, one acknowledges that one is a Christian never for himself but for others. However, as regards the reality of salvation of all men, Kasper puts it plainly, that "we can know nothing of the salvation of others; this knowledge belongs to God alone; but we can however hope for the salvation of all, and vicariously maintain hope in mankind."[1303] These words of Kasper enkindle certain hope, and furthermore, the practical difficulty of the Indian theologians in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in other religions, and their efforts in interpreting the clause "in a way known to God" (GS 22; AG 7) is fully justified.

Finally, it could be said that there is a deep quest in the hearts of Asians/Indians to find new meaning in their lives and to overcome destructive elements and forces. This, they believe, could foster dignity, freedom, genuine communion, and a more human life. Asians/Indians theologians believe that it is only in and through Jesus Christ, his Gospel, and the outpouring and the promptings of the Holy Spirit, that the quest and desire of human hearts can see its realisation – the full meaning of human life. Hence, preaching Jesus Christ and his Gospel to the peoples in Asia/India with personal conviction, remains a top priority, urgency, and a necessity. Whichever pedagogy the Church in India might apply, believing that it well suits Asian/Indian multi-religious and multi-cultural context, her attempts in convincing people of other faiths concering the true and final salvation in Jesus Christ, should never be suppressed. The effects of such pedagogy might not be immediately perceptible because, although preaching is a duty entrusted to us, granting humans the gift of conversion is reserved only to God, and real conversion takes place only when one is open to this gift offered by God and responds to it positively.

[1302] Michael Amaladoss, "Images of Christ and Orientations in Mission," *VJTR* 61, no. 11 (1997): 739.

[1303] Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 167; *idem*, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 358; Cf. also Hans Urs von Balthasar, „Umrisse der Eschatologie," in *Verbum caro*, Hans Urs von Balthasar (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960), 289-291.

5.4.2 Need for Spirit Christology

Kasper meaningfully explains that Jesus Christ is the gift of the Spirit, the goodness and benevolence of the Father towards humanity, to whom we must listen constantly, watch his behaviour continually and contemplate his life and death repeatedly. He says further:

> The spirit of Jesus Christ continually provides a fresh representation of Jesus Christ as corresponds to the demand of the current situation. The gift of the Spirit thus consists in actual fact of becoming aware of Jesus Christ, allowing oneself to be inspired by him, becoming inwardly filled by him, so as to be able genuinely to live, pray, and work in him and from him… According to scripture the church is the normal place where the Spirit is at work; it is his gift and his fruit. [1304]

Kasper asserts that the New Testament is a book that originated in the Church and for the Church. It is the book of the Church.[1305] He also believes that the gifts of the Spirit are allotted to every individual personally, and each has got his/her charism, his/her mission. The mission of the Church is to make each one aware of this Spirit present in him/her and help him/her to develop sensitivity to the guidance of the Spirit and a readiness to be led by him. Jesus Christ, encounters us by means of our openness to humanity in general, and is concretely experienced by the community of those who believe, the Church. In this way Kasper presents the Church as wisdom and truth of God.[1306]

Further, Kasper, convinced that the Spirit blows even outside the walls of the Church, reasons that the Spirit is seen at work everywhere in the world and in history, especially where men and women hunger and thirst for righteousness, where they break through the shell of egoism and commit themselves to God and their neighbour, and where the gospel values are concretely lived.[1307] Each one, gifted according to the measure of Christ's gift, is called upon for the building up of the body of Christ, until all attain unity of faith of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ

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[1304] Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, 49.

[1305] Cf. Kasper, „Prolegomena zur Erneuerung der geistlichen Schriftauslegung," 523.

[1306] Cf. Kasper, „Gottes Gegenwart in Jesus Christus," 327. In the words of Schelling, the Church is a living piece of art. Cf. also Walter Kasper, „Die Kirche als Ort der Wahrheit," 107-113.

[1307] Cf. Kasper, „Kirche – Werk des Heiligen Geistes." In this article Kasper explains the relationship between the Spirit and the Church and argues that the Spirit experiences and Christianity belong to the origin and identity of the Church. At the same time he brings to attention that the Spirit in the Church today appears to be institutionally domesticated and secularised.

(Eph 4:11-13). Kasper adds, "The full and complete fulfilment of man's likeness to God is found in Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ is not only the revelation of the Father; he also reveals 'man to man himself.'"[1308] One who is receptive and open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit will soon come to realise and experience this mystery.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ is seen at work in every person who tries to live a life according to the teachings of Christ, and "whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more a man" (GS 41). Hence Kasper emphasises the need today of understanding the theology of the Holy Spirit, especially the presence of the Spirit in the Church, who in turn makes Jesus Christ present, and also life in the Spirit. The Spirit has its concrete existence in time and history and hence, Kasper calls this Spirit "*Zeit-Geist*."[1309] Further, he opines that there is a need to understand that the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit, and to understand this, means for Kasper, to regain the original idea of Catholicism and to relive this anew.[1310]

Kasper rightly justifies that the time has come for critical discernment of the spirits, not only in other religions but also in Christianity. This is a serious reminder especially for the Indian theologians, not to consider every spirit as the Spirit of Christ. Christianity cannot be kept on equal footing with other existing religions though the Spirit of Christ is active in them too. One requires the spirit of discernment in order to rightly identify the working of the Spirit of Christ, especially in other religious traditions. Consequently, the broad perspective which declares "every religious system to be meaningful for salvation sounds very humanitarian, big-hearted and progressive."[1311] In spite of the acknowledgement that the Spirit of Christ is at work everywhere, the fact should be convincingly communicated that it is in and through Jesus that God tore down the dividing wall between divine and humans. Hence, Jesus is and remains the common meeting point. People can obtain salvation in their respective religions (as they normally believe) but this salvation is made possible through Jesus Christ and his Spirit working in them (a truth, not yet fully accepted).

[1308] Kasper, "The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*," 23.

[1309] Cf. Kasper, „Tradition als theologisches Erkenntnisprinzip," 388. Cf. also George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1966).

[1310] Cf. Kasper, „Kirche – Werk des Heiligen Geistes," 42.

[1311] Cf. Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 161.

Christians accept that the Word and the Spirit of God are also present in other believers and if people of other faiths are genuinely responsive to the Word and the Spirit that is in them, we believe, they will one day find their fulfilment in Christ. As mentioned earlier, it is the mission of the Church to bring this awareness of the work of the Spirit to other religions and convince them that they too are saved in and through Jesus Christ. What about those people and groups "in certain parts of India who cannot become Christians, for whatever reasons, but who remain Christbhaktas?"[1312] (Devotees of Christ). Amaladoss absolutely agrees with the truth that the Word and the Spirit are present in every human being in ways unknown to us (GS 22). He proposes, however, that we need to once again take up apophatic tradition[1313] in relating and approaching the Absolute which will also help one to "be open to other ways of knowing and experiencing the Absolute that the other religions share with us without reducing their experience to our own."[1314]

Wilfred also agrees to the working of the Spirit outside the boundaries of the Catholic Church as he explains:

> The universal saving will of God in relation to humankind (1 Tim 2:3-4), the presence of the resurrected Lord (Jn 8:58; Mk 9:38; 1 Cor 10:4), and the action of the Holy Spirit are not exhausted within the confines of the Church. Discerning God's ways and the working of the Spirit beyond the borders of the Church (Rom 10:10) is a duty incumbent on us… The revelation of God in Christ does not cancel the ways of other religions and cultures. Incarnation is not merely a question of the Logos entering into union with a particular

[1312] Amaladoss, "The Hindu-Christian Encounter: Challenge and Problems," 194. Khrist Bhakta is purely a Catholic movement begun Varanasi, Northern India, spiritual capital of Hindus. It is a movement run by Indian Missionary Society. Thousands of seekers come to this ashram and experience a personal and living relationship with God, many are healed and countless change their life-styles, giving up their vices and weaknesses. Though these seekers (Hindus, Muslims and from many other religious traditions and faiths) are Jesus' devotees, they continue to remain in their faith. They are fascinated by the life and teachings of Jesus, his love for the poor and his sufferings. They experience a sense of freedom and contentment in their relationship with Jesus. This movement is helping devotees of Jesus to overcome their superstitious rituals, evoking in them deeper faith.

[1313] Apophatic theology is also known as negative theology (*via negativa* or via negations) that attempts to describe God by negations. It attempts to speak only in terms of what may not be said about the perfect goodness, God. Apophatic theology is the opposite of cataphatic theology.

[1314] Amaladoss, "The Hindu-Christian Encounter: Challenge and Problems," 197.

> human nature, but also *assumption* of the whole humankind in its wonderful diversity into the divine by way of his identification and solidarity with the human condition.[1315]

Scholastic theology further teaches that in this harmonious union between *Logos* and humanity, Jesus' humanity also received the plenitude of the gifts of grace of the Spirit, thus remaining penetrated and filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Is 16:1; Lk 4:21; Acts 10:38).[1316] The Spirit has the power of new creation and it acts in the life of Jesus, his ministry, death and resurrection, thereby realising the kingdom of freedom.[1317] Kasper firmly asserts that the Spirit is operative in the Church and in the Christian, making Jesus Christ alive and present. He puts it succinctly:

> It is the task of the Spirit to give a universal presence to the person and work of Jesus Christ and to make these real in the individual human being. The task is carried out, however, not mechanically but in the freedom of the Spirit… The explicit acknowledgement of the independent personality of the Spirit is therefore anything but speculative indulgence; at issue in it is the reality of Christian salvation: the Christian freedom that is based on the freedom of God's gift and grace.[1318]

Kasper appreciates the efforts of Indian theologians who are trying to seek the Spirit of Jesus Christ in other religions but he appeals that the veracity of the Spirit should be rightly discerned. The West might find it difficult to understand the Asian/Indian mentality but that does not mean that the Church in India should not continue her attempts. The Holy See, in the past, had difficulties in understanding the Asian/Indian theologians, and it might experience such dilemmas also in the future, but these should be further closely studied, clarified and discussed, and not just disapproved (Interview 1). The only plea that Kasper makes is that utmost care must be taken that the legitimate approach to our fundamental belief itself is not contrary. When the basic Christian foundation itself is weak and deficient, ambiguous and faulty, the entire edifice is not

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[1315] Felix Wilfred, "Some Heuristic Propositions on the Relationship of Christianity to Non-Christian Religions and Cultures," *Indian Theological Studies* 24, nos. 2 and 3 (1987): 227-228. This was a paper prepared for a discussion at a meeting of Theologians held at Rome in May, 1987

[1316] Cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 250-251.

[1317] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 202-210. See also, Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers*; Hans- Jochen Jaschke, *Der Heilige Geist im Bekenntnis der Kirche: Eine Studie zur Pneumatologie des Irenäus von Lyon im Ausgang vom altchristlichen Glaubensbekenntnis*, Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 40 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1976).

[1318] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 211.

going to stand for long. Kasper feels that it is very important also for the Asian/Indian theologians and for their newly developing theology/Christology, to be in some way in communion with the West. And Rome should also try not to always judge the Asian/Indian theological and spiritual undertakings, especially using Western/Greek thinking pattern.

5.4.3 Dialogues and Interlocutions: Transcending Ghetto-mentality

As mentioned earlier, it was FABC which translated the dialogical impetus of the Second Vatican Council in Asia in three major directions most relevant to the Asian situation: dialogue with *cultures*, with *religion*s and with the *poor*.[1319] Wilfred explains it clearly:

> Most stimulating re-interpretation of Christian faith took place in Asia not by the reading of Christian dogmas through Asian conceptual categories, as through the concrete dialogical praxis in these three major areas. The new conception of culture (far from the evolutionary one) to be found throughout the documents of the Council, and the orientations of *Nostra aetate* provided the seminal thoughts to develop dialogue with cultures and religions.[1320]

The FABC, in its first Plenary Assembly also categorically stated that evangelisation involves dialogue with great religious traditions and in dialogue we accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation.[1321] Hence, a great need is felt to avoid macro dialogues, and instead, concentrate on concrete existential realities of life, which hopefully might result in fruitful and productive engagement.

One of the difficulties the Indian theologians experience today pertains to their Christian theological engagements in India. They begin actually from the level of experience and therefore, are not to be judged and "interpreted through the Western terms of the

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[1319] Cf. Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multireligious Continent," 116-117. The First General Assembly of FABC (Taipei 1974) announced these three dialogues which later became foundational for the subsequent developments in the thoughts of FABC. Also cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Proclaiming the Gospel," *VJTR* 57 (1993): 29.

[1320] Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multireligious Continent," 117.

[1321] Cf. Rosales and Arêvalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia.* Vol. I, 14.

discussion."[1322] Hence, it is of prime importance that the points of departure and perspectives of understanding religion in the Western as well as in the Asian/Indian context are clearly defined. When this clarity is achieved, dialogue will become mutually enriching and it will help both (the West and Asia/India) in acknowledging and respecting the differences. In the words of Kasper, dialogue or ecumenism is not a losing bargain but a mutual enrichment, growth to fullness and an exchange of faith.[1323]

In dialogue today, besides discussing one's religious similarities and dissimilarities, there is a great need to mutually share deep God-experiences. Such a sharing could lead one to discover and affirm the cosmic dimension of Jesus. Amaladoss opines that "once the presence and action of Christ is recognised in other religions, then the only way of relating to them is dialogue."[1324] In the words of Pope Francis dialogue is, besides spiritual and cultural exchange, keeping alive the thirst for the absolute (*in der Welt den Durst nach dem Absoluten lebendig zu halten*).[1325] This can contribute to each other's enrichment and can gradually move towards a common convergence of our understanding of God.

Gradually, Christianity/the Church, through such dialogue, needs to help members of other religions to concretely recognise the action of Christ and his Spirit working in them, leading them to the conviction that it is the Spirit of Jesus Christ that is present in them. *Gaudium et Spes* states clearly that "the truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man takes on light" (GS 22) and as mentioned earlier, according to Kasper, Jesus Christ, who is the complete fulfilment of man's likeness to God, not only reveals the Father but also reveals "man to man himself."[1326] Only then, as Amaladoss identifies, can there exist an inter-relationship between proclamation and dialogue. They are seen as dialectical poles in the process of evangelisation.[1327] He states, "One's dialogue, if it goes beyond good neighbourliness and sharing of experience to mutual witness and challenge (prophecy), involves witnessing to one's deep faith

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[1322] Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 658.

[1323] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe," 227 and 236; idem, „Das Zweite Vatikanum Weiterdenken," 215-218.

[1324] Amaladoss, "Images of Christ and Orientations in Mission," 738.

[1325] Kasper, *Papst Franziskus - Revolution der Zärtlichkeit und der Liebe*, 88.

[1326] Kasper, "The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*," 23.

[1327] Cf. Thesis on Inter-religious Dialogue: An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection. FABC Papers, No. 48 (Hong Kong, 1987). See particularly Thesis 6 on pp. 15-18.

convictions, which is proclamation."[1328] Hence, what the Church in India needs today is a dialogue with conviction and sharing of rich personal spiritual experiences, and at the same time, acknowledging the presence of the activity of the Spirit in the concrete life situation of others.

There are some in India who have taken the post-Vatican developments seriously as regards the appreciation of other religions. They have tried both: exploring the implications for inter-religious dialogue as well as proclamation of the Gospel.[1329] Amaladoss however opines, that today dialogue should go beyond communicative action and strive for the emergence of a community, avoiding rational consensus. In this regard, Amaladoss believes, that Christianity/the Church in India is called to build up humanity as one community in harmony and peace in which all pluralism will be respected and accepted.[1330] He endorses the ideology of Pope St. John Paul II who believed that in every dialogue God is present and hence, opening oneself in dialogue to others is opening onself to God.

Kasper proposes that Christianity, through its genuine encounter with other world religions, should deepen and enrich its own understanding of mysticism. Such interactions are meant not only to discuss divine realities, but also to address concrete human life situations like justice, peace, equality, and especially human sufferings. This could, Kasper opines, probably help the other to become cognizant of her/his situation with regard to salvation and perhaps also enrich the other as regards the Christian understanding of human person, history and suffering.[1331] Such a dialogue is needed today, especially in the Indian context, a dialogue that does not merely discuss abstract categories and systems of learning (merely an intellectual pursuit), but a dialogue that tries to understand realities like God, the world and the soul, in a deeper way. Along with the Indian theologians, Kasper acknowledges that from such dialogues, we also have something to learn and receive, not only give.[1332] He believes that Christianity is planted

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[1328] Amaladoss, "Proclaiming the Gospel," 29.

[1329] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Praying Together," *Indian Theological Studies* 29 (1992): 107-124; John B. Chethimattam, "Nature and Scope of Inter-religious Dialogue Today," *Jeevadhara* 22 (1992): 331-355. Cf. also Domenico Colombo, *Another Gospel for Asia*? FABC Papers 62 (Hong Kong, FABC, 1991).

[1330] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Dialogue as Conflict Resolution: creative Praxis." For the complete article visit: http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/amaladoss1.html (accessed November 10, 2014).

[1331] Cf. Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" 166-167.

[1332] Cf. Kasper, „Religionsfreiheit als theologisches Problem," 224.

in the cultural richness of humanity where it has to grow and be ingrained.[1333] Only then will it be able to capture "in all its length and breadth, height and depth, the fullness of the mystery that was given to us in Jesus Christ (Eph 3:18)."[1334] Indian religions, especially Christianity, need to take this giving-taking, teaching-learning component of dialogue seriously. Kasper sees the Church as the sacrament of dialogue between God and man, and she therefore becomes the 'Dialogue Sacrament,' advocate of God's truth and the advocate of man's freedom. He maintains further, that the Church is also a place of truth, and a prophetic sign and instrument of unity, peace and forgiveness in the world.[1335]

Amaladoss, like Kasper, constantly reminds that it is the task of inter-religious dialogue to respect the identity of each religion, even when each believer bears witness to his own religious convictions.[1336] These convictions do not and should not become obstacles to an active collaboration at all levels. Amaladoss further suggests that we should "widen participation to include people at all levels. We should also broaden the focus to include not only inter-religious exchange but also a common effort to make a religious impact on common human problems."[1337] He proposes three models of evangelisation: Church-centred, World-centred and Kingdom-centred, where dialogue is the principal activity of evangelisation and even proclamation becomes an aspect of dialogue.[1338]

Wilfred reminds of an important, but often neglected element of revelation namely, interior revelation, which is not an entirely new concept. Jesus himself says, "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:21). Augustine drew attention to this aspect when he referred to Jesus Christ as the teacher within us (*Habemus enim intus magistrum Christum*). Even Thomas Aquinas spoke about the 'interior speaking' of God. Such thinking has found great acceptance and appeal in the Asian/Indian tradition where God himself is seen as a *guru*, who teaches from within.[1339] Amaladoss has also attempted to explore the various meanings of the term *guru* in the Indian tradition, and has tried to

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[1333] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 122-123.

[1334] Kasper, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," 16.

[1335] Cf. Kasper, „Die Kirche as Ort der Wahrheit," 111, 112, 121.

[1336] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 128-129.

[1337] Michael Amaladoss, "The Future of the Church's Mission in India," *Jeevadhara* 17, no. 101 (1987): 384.

[1338] Cf. Amaladoss, "Evangelization in Asia," 449-450.

[1339] Cf. Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 893-894.

understand the different aspects of the life of Jesus. Jesus is for him a *guru*, a *sannyasi* – a world-renouncer and a wanderer, a *guru* with a community of disciples, who "launched a national movement of personal, social, and political liberation."[1340] Since his movement was very much centred on life and community, Amaladoss considers Jesus as a *guru* who can inspire other *gurus*.

Further, the Church in Asia/India is often reminded that faithfulness to the Gospel and its authentic transmission to the wider world should never be of less concern. Asian theologians should carefully observe that the message of the Gospel, while transmitted, is not betrayed. Wilfred further reminds that we, Asians, need to give importance to the aspect of listening, not only to the divine voice within ourself, but also to others and at all levels, especially in a multi-cultural and multi-religious country like India where "our Christian faith in the Asian continent is lived and practised."[1341] However, he dares to question the possibility of a harmonious relationship between Christians and members of other faiths, if Christians fail to understand, interact, and most important, participate, in what is dear and sacred to members of other faiths.[1342] According to Wilfred:

> The interpretation of Christ's inexhaustible Mystery in the cultural forms and thought-patterns of a people may bring in freshness, richness, new insights and depth which may help other peoples and cultures to re-vitalize themselves in their faith and to be evangelized anew… The diversity of dogmatic interpretations in the various cultural milieus must be accompanied by dialogue and mutual clarification among the various local churches of the globe.[1343]

Our approach to other religions should be always positive and welcoming, argues Wilfred, like Amaladoss. He asserts that forcing other religions and members of other faiths into our mould and frame of mind is not permissible. He maintains:

> Positive enquiry into other religious traditions and empathetic understanding of them are required before making theological pronouncements about their place and validity... Judging other religions without positive knowledge of them but only on the basis of pre-

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[1340] Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, 85. For more on Amaladoss' understanding of Jesus as *guru*, read especially Chapter V, *Jesus, the Guru*, pages 69-85

[1341] Wilfred, "Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology," 895.

[1342] Cf. Wilfred, "Popular Religion and Asian Contextual Theologizing," 151.

[1343] Felix Wilfred, "Dogma and Culture," *VJTR* 53, no. 7 (1989): 353.

> conceived theoretical principle is, to say the least, unfair… Reducing other religions (without attempting to enter into the world of their experience) into our theological categories and condemning them (without giving them an opportunity to explain themselves) would be an *epistemological naivete* and an *ethical impropriety*… By forcing other religions into our mould we would, apart from missing what is valuable in them, fail, more basically, in fidelity to truth.[1344]

Amaladoss has tried to realise this reflection of Wilfred by identifying and elaborating God's action of self-communication in the Word and in the Spirit as an all embracing divine activity which draws in all people especially those of good will. He takes this project of God as a perfect pattern for dialogue and collaboration in building up healthy communities of love and fraternity.[1345] Wilfred, who believes that religions play a significant role in public spheres, also identifies a blend of Hindu and Christian tradition in the life of Indian Christians.[1346] Religions could prove fruitful and effective, provided they unite together for the common good of the society and humanity. Hence Wilfred argues that, "Interreligious dialogue and cooperation in Asia should be a contribution to Asia's struggle for greater humanization. It is this which calls for dialogue and understanding among religions, so that they could participate in the public space and join hands to build up the community."[1347]

Pope St. John Paul II clearly expressed this in his dialogue with the Hindu religion. The Church wishes dialogue, new relationship, understanding and solidarity, and she is open to the whole world. The Church in Asia today, which has already entered the third millennium, should understand her new mission in her specific religious and cultural context. Conceptual dogmas cannot be presented to the modern world[1348] and Neuner also has argued that the present world which is multi-religious and multi-cultural "does not

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[1344] Wilfred, "Some Heuristic Propositions on the Relationship of Christianity to Non-Christian Religions and Cultures," 225-226.

[1345] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness: Searching for an Integral Spirituality* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1994), 82-83.

[1346] Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Hindu Heritage and Indian Christianity," *CONC* 2 (2009): 87.

[1347] Wilfred, "Asian Religious Pluralism and Higher Education," 38. Cf also M. M. Thomas, "The World in Which We Preach Christ," *The Ecumenical Review* 16, no. 3 (1964): 258-265. There was a meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held at Mexico City, 8-19 December 1963. For more on this see, Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964).

[1348] Cf. Fürlinger, „Der Dialog muss weitergehen," 279.

admit monopolies; it looks for a vision of a renewed world."[1349] Furthermore, Pope Francis mentions two basic challenges of pluralism today: multi-polarity (*Multipolarität*) and transversality (*Transversalität*)[1350] and invites partners in dialogue to start thinking outside the box, avoiding being hierarchical. The Church and the society today call for new movements in dialogues, those that avoid and transcend stereotype-thinking and ghettoising. In such a situation, is the Church in Asia/India capable of offering to the world this vision of a new community?

Kasper, in his interview, acknowledged that dialogue is a process of enriching each other and in such a process, not all queries can be resolved at a single sitting. He proposes the fundamental method – transversality.[1351] Dialogue therefore does not mean accepting everything as equal or placing everything on an equal footing. Kasper also remarked about some of the temples that kept statues of different gods and goddesses besides each other, including that of Jesus Christ, considering him as one of the incarnations (*avatara*) of God (Interview 2).

Finally, it would be fitting to make a brief mention of the art of dialogue that Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor proposes, which is however not new, but as a reminder, could certainly be helpful in the Asian/Indian scenario, in realising it in a deeper and meaningful way. He speaks of the "dialogue of life"[1352] in which the Church at times, needs to be like "a city on the Hill," clear, visible, confident and at other times, emphasise

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[1349] Joseph Neuner, "Proclaiming Jesus Christ: Reflections on *Ecclesia in Asia*," *VJTR* 64 (2000): 540. Cf. also J. Gordon Melton, "New Religious Movements: Dialogues Beyond Stereotypes and Labels," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, ed. Alan Race and Paul Hedges (London: SCM Press, 2008), 308-323.

[1350] Kasper, *Papst Franziskus - Revolution der Zärtlichkeit und der Liebe*, 116.

[1351] Transversality (transversal) is a mathematical (geometry) term used to indicate a line intersecting two or more other lines. Pope Francis, delivering a talk in the European Parliament spoke about transversality. Enrique D. Dussel, an Argentinian philosopher speaks of the transversal dialogue of difference and the possibility of relating to one another, possibility of critical thinking. Transversality means thinking outside the box and not hierarchical. In the process, we search for common ideas and at the same time, try to understand the differences and respect them.

[1352] Even Amaladoss and Wilfred speak of 'dialogue of life' but I like the way Cardinal Murphy explains such a dialogue – easily contrivable, viable and doable in the Asian/Indian context. FABC has also made 'dialogue' a comprehensive *modus operandi* of the Church in Asia – a dialogue with four components: dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange and dialogue of religious experience. For details cf. Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, No. 42 (19. May, 1991). Cf. also William R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 93-118. This section contains reflections and orientations on Inter-religious dialogue and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ issued by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

more the hidden, but not less powerful, presence of being "the leaven in the dough."[1353] The Church needs to know what is best for a given situation in which she lives and moves and the best paradigm Cardinal Murphy finds, is Christ's 'dialogue of life' with the Samaritan woman at the well.[1354]

Cardinal Murphy identifies three steps in such a 'dialogue of life.' At the very outset the Samaritan woman regards Christ as an 'outsider.' The secular society could regard the Church as an outsider, come to a place where she is not expected to be. She might be also viewed with certain hostility because she enters a territory, which the secular society has defended and claimed as its own. Secondly the meeting point between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is the well of Jacob, a point where the past and the future converge. Like the woman at the well, the Church also needs to grapple with her history, until she comes to this meeting point of convergence – her common humanity, her frailty. Only then can she move beyond her roles of being strangers and antagonists, to the beginning of an encounter – a real dialogue.

Cardinal Murphy terms such a dialogue, a dialogue of respect. Jesus too, without compromising his own truth, never dismissed her truth (GS 28). In such a dialogue of life, the Church like Jesus might be able to help the other in unfolding the deepest level of his/her truth and longing for life, which only God can give. It is not a longing for material happiness or spiritual consolation, as one normally thinks, but a profound longing for God (theological longing). The Cardinal clearly warns that the Church's dialogue with the world should not just be about the world; instead, it should be a search for salvation. The Church herself, before beginning a dialogue, needs to be convinced of the fundamental truth entrusted to her, namely, that the search for salvation in Jesus Christ cannot be in vain. In such a dialogue the world will, like the woman, experience the truth that God is forever *semper maior* (ever greater),[1355] and Christ will no longer be a stranger to the world. It will welcome him as the Samaritans did, who asked him to stay with them (Jn 4:40). Kasper's ideology serves as a meaningful conclusion to this discussion on dialogue

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[1353] Cf. Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, "*Ecclesia Caritatis*: Reasons for Living and Hoping," in *Reasons for Living and Hoping*, 126-131.

[1354] Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1978).

[1355] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 84.

- a dialogue between Christianity and other religions will really become fruitful when such a dialogue becomes a spiritual event.[1356]

5.4.4 Mission of the Church Today: Making Jesus Known and Loved

It has been often noted that earlier mission had a problem, but today mission itself has become a problem.[1357] This sounds very true, not only in the West but also in the Asian scenario. Earlier, man had practical and realistic aims but faulty or defective means. Today man has excellent means but confused goals. In such a *status quo*, Kasper maintains that we should understand mission as the universal task of the Church since the Church today, throughout the world, lives in Diaspora.[1358] Kasper also addresses the key issue the Church is facing today with regard to theology and mission, namely, the identity-relevance dilemma. He states:

> With its programme of aggiornamento the Church runs the risk of surrendering its unambiguousness for the sake of openness. Yet, whenever it tries to speak straightforwardly and clearly it risks losing sight of men and their actual problems. If the Church worries about identity, it risks a loss of relevance; if on the other hand it struggles for relevance, it may forfeit its identity.[1359]

Kasper identifies a close relationship between identity and relevance and he believes that "only the one who has identity can have relevance."[1360] Hence Kasper seems to propose that theology and the Church must maintain a balance between identity and relevance, if they are to give an authentic translation or interpretation of God's revelation in Scripture and Tradition.

[1356] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 129.

[1357] Walter Freytag, „Strukturwandel der wesentlichen Missionen," in *Reden und Aufsätze*, Band I, Walter Freytag, (München: Kaiser, 1961), 111. Also cf. Josef Amstutz, Glancario Collet und Werner Zurfluh, ed., *Kirche und Dritte Welt im Jahr 2000* (Zürich Einsiedln Köln: Benziger, 1974).

[1358] Cf. Kasper, „Die Kirche als universales Sakrament des Heils," 35. Cf. also Walter Kasper, „Die Weitergabe des Glaubens: Schwierigkeiten und Notwendigkeit einer zeitgemäßen Glaubensvermittlung," in *Einführung in den Katholischen Erwachsenenkatechismus*, third edition, ed. Walter Kasper (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985), 16.

[1359] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 15; idem, *Theology and Church*, 4-5.

[1360] Walter Kasper, "Nature, Grace and Culture: On the Meaning of Secularization," in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. David L. Schindler (Notre Dame, IN: Communio Books, 1994), 44.

Kasper convincingly articulates that the Spirit ultimately and finally broke through in Jesus Christ and continues Christ's work in history today. The Church has a great responsibility in making Christ's Spirit operative and effective, at present and even in the future. The Church of Jesus Christ is *congregatio fidelium*, *communio sacramentorum*, and *concretum universale*.[1361] He further opines that only the one who knows his origin, appreciates it, and knows how to make it fruitful, and such a person has a future.[1362] The Church has a future and she will be spiritually renewed, provided she allows the Spirit of God to reawaken life in her. Kasper envisions such a spiritually renewed Church (*ecclesia semper purificanda*) with men and women who live from the "power of faith, hope, and love, in the power of prayer and sacrifice."[1363]

The Church, opines Kasper, is "the ally of freedom, the twin sister of truth."[1364] It calls believers today to witness the birth of new humanism (GS 55), to advocate new humanism and a new culture of life and love. Thus the Church is '*una, sancta, catholica et apostolica ecclesia*' in which all differences between peoples, cultures, races, classes and genders are abolished.[1365] The unity and the catholicity of the Church is a becoming, since it always remains a task.[1366] Kasper is very optimistic and sees progress in the unity of the Church, but at the same time strongly warns that the question concerning the unity of the Church cannot and should not be underestimated, since the unity of the Church is the gift of the Spirit.[1367] He clearly alerts that mutual absorption and integration is not the solution but conversion, which is the outcome of one's faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the highest norm in and above the Church.[1368] The Church therefore, has the mission of proclaiming not herself but Jesus Christ, on whom she has to consistently orient herself anew.[1369]

[1361] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 108-112, 179-180.

[1362] Cf. Kasper, „Religion und die Zukunft des Menschen," 314.

[1363] Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, 61. See also LG 8; Cf. UR 6-8.

[1364] Kasper, "The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*," 27.

[1365] Cf. Kasper, „Kirche als Communio," 76. idem, "Church as *Communio*," *Communio* 13 (Summer, 1986): 100-117.

[1366] Cf. Kasper, „Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil," 268-271.

[1367] Cf. Kasper, „Ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe," 233, 238.

[1368] Cf. Kasper, „Der ekkesologische Charakter der nichtkatholischen Kirche," 62.

[1369] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Jesus und der Glaube," in *Jesus Ja – Kirche Nein?* ed. Walter Kasper und Jürgen Moltmann (Köln: Benzinger Verlag, 1973), 15.

Kasper also reiterates the need of mission today. According to him, the mission of the Church today should aim at the unity of nations, reconciliation of hearts, assistance in freeing non-Christian religions, leading them to a new birth, to a new hope.[1370] He sees the future of the Church in her openness to the Spirit of Jesus Christ and this, he believes, will also result in her spiritual renewal.[1371] Kasper reiterates that it is impossible to compare the Catholic Church with non-Catholic churches and other communities as far as charismatic gifts are concerned. Even as regards the fullness of means of salvation, he opines, that the Church may not claim that this fullness is realised in her in a perfect manner.[1372] Hence, there is a need for reform and renewal also in the Catholic Church.

The Church in India should carefully include the significant task of saving the world in its mission work, so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ bears rich fruits on Indian soil. As Kasper suggests, freeing the non-Christian religions and leading them to a new birth, should be the Church's top priority. Amaladoss also admits that Indians (Christians) have not committed themselves whole-heartedly in building up the Kingdom of God. Certain factors like "theological questions, official doubts, self-defensive fears, minority hesitations, practical difficulties, the bitter after-taste of conflicts" [1373] etc., he belives, have withdrawn Indians from giving witness to their God-experience in Jesus Christ.

Another significant feature which could be taken from Kasper's christological project for the mission of the Church today in India is his triple element of dialogical and diaconal relation to the other religions. According to Kasper:

[1370] Cf. Kasper, "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," 20.

[1371] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 329-347. Kasper discusses at great length the history of the Church, her nature and mission, and finally questions the future of the Church. For more on future of the Church see also Kasper, *Faith and the Future*; idem, „Kirche – wohin gehst du?," in *Die Kirche Jesu Christi*, Schriften zur Ekklesiologie 1, Gesammelte Schriften, Band XI, ed. George Augustin und Klaus Krämer (Freigburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 212-237; Joseph Ratzinger, „Wie wird die Kirche im Jahr 2000 aussehen?," in *Glaube und Zukunft* (München: Kösel, 1970); idem, „The Church on the threshold of the Third Millennium," in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005); Karl Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," in *Theological Investigations* Vol. XX, 103-114; Karl Lehmann, *Neuer Mut zum Kirchesein* (Freigburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1982), Kurt Koch, *Kirche ohne Zukunft: Plädoyer für neue Wege der Glaubensvermittlung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1993); Medard Kehl, *Wohin geht die Kirche? Eine Zeitdiagnose* (Freigburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1996); Hans Küng, *Ist die Kirche noch zu retten?* (München: Piper, 2011); Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, *Kirchenkrise: Wie überlebt das Christentum?* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2011).

[1372] Cf. Kasper, „Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem II Vatikanischen Konzil," 274.

[1373] Amaladoss, "The Hindu-Christian Encounter: Challenge and Problems," 202.

> Christianity gives its assent to, respects, and defends all that is true, good, noble, and holy in other religions (Phil 4:8) (*via positiva seu affirmative*); it criticizes prophetically whatever in them is detrimental to the honour of God and the dignity of man; it critiques any improper mingling of the divine and the human that detracts from the dignity of both (*via negativa seu critica et prophetica*); finally, Christianity wishes to invite other religions to reach their own fullness and their own fulfilment by placing faith in Jesus Christ and sharing in his fullness (*via eminentiae*).[1374]

In fact, the decree of the Second Vatican Council on mission sums up all three dimensions: all that is good and true in humanity's religions finds in Jesus Christ its greatest unity and should be critically measured by him, purified by him, and brought to its fulfilment by him (AG 9). Kasper adds that it is also the essential task of the Church to gather the wisdom of all generations and all times in order to grow in the knowledge and experience of the complete fullness of God.[1375] In this regard, the Church in India needs to be both – tolerant and prophetic.

Amaladoss has made a similar proposal. He asserts that the Church has to assimilate the positive values from others and renounce the negative values in oneself. It is then that the Church would be able to establish its identity in comparison with others and be a strong relevant witness to its message and its value. The Church has to play the role of animation, not by being exclusive but by facilitating and coordinating, thus achieving a holistic and integral liberation.[1376]

Kasper reminds of the stress Karl Rahner laid on the close inner relationship between the realisation of God's salvific mystery in Jesus Christ and the Church.[1377] The Church is simultaneously the fruit and the means of salvation; "for it is both an actualising sign of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, and a sacramental instrument for passing on this eschatological salvation to all human beings."[1378] This element has not yet been sufficiently stressed in the Indian context. The Church needs to become an essential element in the implementation of the divine offer of salvation and in this regard, her

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[1374] Kasper, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," 17.

[1375] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Dir Kirche unter dem Wort Gottes," *CONC* 1 (1965): 305.

[1376] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Future of the Church's Mission in India," 385-386.

[1377] Cf. Karl Rahner, „Das Grundwesen der Kirche," in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* 1, Arnold Franz Xaver (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 129.

[1378] Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 121.

mission in Asia/India is not just to engage itself in seeing that "a Hindu becomes a better Hindu, a Buddhist a better Buddhist and a Muslim, a better Muslim."[1379] Kasper points out that the mission of the Church is much more than this – to help other religions and convince them that in Jesus Christ and in his work, the dividing wall has been broken down and through Jesus all have access in one Spirit to the Father. In him is the fullness of reality and this Jesus is the common meeting point.[1380] In and from Jesus Christ, his person and his cause, the meaning and significance of the Christian mission is revealed.[1381]

Amaladoss makes a very significant observation which would be very helpful for the future of Church's mission. According to him proclaiming Christ in the Indian multi-cultural and multi-religious context should be the outcome of concrete life and practical struggles of the people. Other methodologies of proclamation, especially those controlled or borrowed from the West, maintains Amaladoss, could be of no much help.[1382] Furthermore, the Church cannot claim any exclusivity but what it can claim is a 'special knowledge' of the special revelation in Jesus and this special knowledge, however, Amaladoss reminds, is more a mission than a privilege,[1383] knowledge to be convincingly proclaimed, and not to be dictated or imposed.

It is evident today that the thinking of many Christian theologians in Asia has been formed largely by Euro-American teachers, or Asians that have been formed in Euro-American universities. He reminds that theology in Euro-American universities is treated as a 'science' but for Asians, theology is "*sadhana* or spiritual practise."[1384] One of the criticisms that is repeatedly heard in Asia is that the priests of the Church have a different life-orientation. They are mostly scholars, administrators, social workers, and less *gurus*, guides or teachers. It is very important that today theology should not be seen only as

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[1379] Hubertus Halbfas, *Fundamentalkatechetik. Sprache und Erfahrung im Religionsunterricht* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1968), 241. If such is the case, Joseph Ratzinger argues that the purpose of mission is also to see that a cannibal becomes a better cannibal and a convinced SS-Mann, a complete SS-Mann. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, „Kein Heil außerhalb der Kirche?" in *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1969), 356.

[1380] Cf. Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angesichts der Religionen," 354-355.

[1381] Cf. Kasper, "Die Kirche als universals Sakrament des Heils," 43.

[1382] See Amaladoss, Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be One? xv.

[1383] Cf. Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission," 77.

[1384] Amaladoss, "Is There An Asian Way of Doing Theology?" 20.

science, but also as wisdom. Such a wisdom, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which gradually unfolds the reality of God, is very much needed in the world today.[1385]

Amaladoss proposes the need of a new methodology, a new strategy, one of faith-experience, and has recourse in stories (evocative pedagogy) and religious discourses. According to this approach, he suggests that we need to help the seekers, especially the members of other faiths, to find Jesus in the communities and concrete life situations, as he maintains that Jesus is "not found in the pages of the Gospel nor in the creedal formulae of the Church."[1386] Kasper would not fully agree to this proposal of Amaladoss which appears to override the fundamental faith-principle of the Church. Stories and symbols that are used, along with the life-experience and faith of the community should also help one to identify Jesus Christ and his mysteries in the Gospel and creedal formulas, thus making Jesus more tangible. *Ecclesia in Asia* also recommends the use of stories, parables and symbols, appropriate form and language that fits the Asian teaching methodology. It also stresses the need to evangelise in a way that "appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples" but at the same time being "faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition" (EA 20). Kasper opines that both – Scripture and Tradition are closely related to each other and both are to be accepted and revered with esteem.[1387]

If one has to reflect what the Church could do for India, one has to first reflect on the situation of India today. India is indeed a poor country and nothing remarkable can be done to eradicate poverty. Another serious issue is the prevailing caste system in many parts of the nation, a practice against the Indian Constitution which on the contrary, calls for equality and democracy. Communalism is also another major problem today. The Church in India needs to build up communities of people and every Christian community should be a sign of fellowship, respecting the dignity and individuality of every human person. The Church has to engage herself primarily in promoting Gospel values and be very prophetic. Wilfred very much agrees to this thought as he also opines that the Church is called today to build a harmonious relationship between religion and

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[1385] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Theologie und Heligkeit," in *Sie suchten die Wahrheit. Heilige Theologen*, ed. Walter Kasper (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1985), 11.

[1386] Cf. Amaladoss, "Images of Jesus in India," 14.

[1387] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Die Bedeutung der Heiligen Schrift für Kirche und christliches Leben nach der dogmatischen Konstitution Über die göttliche Offenbarung," *Bibel und Kirche* 21 (1966): 55-56.

culture.[1388] Amaladoss has created awareness that unfortunately, "the visibility of the Church in India today would be its institutions, concerned with education, health and development."[1389] Today, if the Church desires to be a catalyst of transforming, it needs to evangelise by involving herself in the concrete living conditions of the people.[1390] It is clear that such a contextualised mission in Asia/India is not only desired, but also the need of the hour.

However, Indian theologians are positive about the contribution of Christianity and they even hope that Christianity can provide more impetus for creating communities which could also indirectly help the nation to grow and move forward. The importance of the role of the Church is brought out by Stanley Samartha who believes that, in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society like India, the Church has the potential to foster true community life and also help the nation in its growt and progress.[1391]

People have often posed questions like: "Why do we need proclamation today? If other religions are also ways of salvation, why do we need to proclaim the Gospel and seek to baptise people? In former times, the need of other people to be saved motivated our missionaries but why do we need to continue this even now?" Amaladoss answers that a Christian is someone who has discovered and experienced deep within oneself the Good News. The new experience of the Good News, the inner joy and the inner drive animates one to go out in the world and give witness to what one has heard and experienced.[1392] This enlivened person believes that this Good News has something specific and essential to contribute to the growth of humanity. To the question, "Why still mission?" Kasper answers that mission is necessary for the Epiphany of the eschatological reign of God, for

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[1388] Wilfred, "Some Heuristic Propositions on the Relationship of Christianity to Non-Christian Religions and Cultures." 223-224.

[1389] Cf. Amaladoss, "The Future of the Church's Mission in India," 378-380.

[1390] Cf. Amaladoss, "Evangelization in Asia: A New Focus?" 460.

[1391] Cf. Wilfred, "Christianity and Religious Cosmopolitanism," 118-119; Stanley Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious Relationships* (Geneva: WCC, 1981), 27. Samartha acknowledges that these problems are also experienced by churches in countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia.

[1392] Cf. Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?" 76.

unity and peace, for the liberation and reconciliation of humanity, which has been promised by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[1393]

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* refers to the risk of distortion that the preaching of the Gospel might run, because of biased media. As a result, the message that the Church preaches could be identified as a secondary aspect, failing to convey the heart of Jesus' message (EG 34). The missionary style and pastoral goal today should be such that the message of Jesus Christ, the message of love, reaches everyone without exclusion or exception, concentrated on essentials, without losing its depths and truth, but rather with conviction (EG 35). George Augustine has beautifully elaborated this theme of the need of both, personal and communitarian encounter with Jesus Christ.[1394] He quotes Pope Francis who in turn untiringly repeats Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter of an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*Deus caritas est* 1). Pope Francis lately made reference to the faith-crisis that is seen also in Europe.[1395] He desires that the Gospel of love preached should illumine one another, and the truth of the Gospel should be evident in present Christian living. The message of Jesus will then never run the risk of losing its freshness and will never cease to have "the fragrance of the Gospel" (EG 39).

As a response to the this desire of Pope Francis, it should be duly acknowledged that the Asian churches have not only tried to implement the directives, guidelines and implications of Second Vatican Council, but to a certain extent, carried the Council one step further. Wilfred identifies two special important areas: theology of religion and understanding of mission. He maintains: "Though in Asia there has been fresh thinking and initiatives to relate to peoples of other faiths right from the nineteenth century, it was with the Second Vatican Council that inter-religious dialogue became programmatic and

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[1393] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Warum noch Mission?" in *Glaube und Geschichte* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald Verlag, 1970), 259-274; idem, „Die Kirche als universales Sakrament des Heils," 34. Cf. also Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 118.

[1394] Cf. George Augustin, „Kirche im Aufbruch? Eine Skizze zur Orientierung," in *Freude an Gott: Auf dem Weg zu einem lebendigen Glauben*, ed. George Augustin und Markus Schulze (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2015), 635-666.

[1395] Pope Francis feels that Europe has grown tired and that we must help her to grow young again and to trace her roots. In his address to the European Council on November 25, 2014, at Strasbourg (official seat of the European Parliament) in north eastern France, he posed questions on Europe concerning her energy, her aspirations, her spirit of curious adventures and her thirst for truth, which she once passionately imparted. Cf. Kasper, *Papst Franziskus - Revolution der Zärtlichkeit und der Liebe*, 114, 119.

got a new impetus."[1396] It has to be acknowledged that Asian theologians have drawn important insights not only from *Nostra Aaetate*, but also from other Vatican Documents like *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*. Asian theologians are aware that the Church in Asia is called to take a kenotic form in taking God's mission toward, and they are working to achieve this end.

The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation. How can one describe this attribute of the Church? The universal nature and the sacramental character of the Church could be understood in two ways: by her very constitution, the Church is believed to possess the totality of the means of salvation, and secondly, she is sent to all with a missionary mandate to be present and be visible everywhere, to all and at all times. If salvation is understood as God's work of reconciliation of the sinful humanity to himself, and the Church as the ambassador of Christ bearing the message of God's reconciliation, then the Church is the sign of the total work of salvation accomplished through Christ.[1397] Sandra Mazzolini, emphasising the role of the Church as the sign and instrument of that one great mystery Jesus Christ, clearly states: "Guided and animated by the Holy Spirit, it is a privileged gateway for the encounter of human beings with the Saviour of men and women."[1398]

Kasper, speaking about the Church as the sign and instrument of the Holy Spirit, discusses three main traits the Church needs to have today, especially in Asia/India, if she needs to be active and be filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Kasper explains the three traits of the Church as following: The Church of Christ is an institution as well as an event; a Church that not only gathers but also sends, and finally, a Church with unity in diversity.[1399] However, these marks of the Church in no way claim or demand her completeness. He admits that the Church cannot be everything, but she can be there for everybody.[1400] According to Kasper, Church unity could also be defined as

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[1396] Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multireligious Continent," 118.

[1397] Cf. Peter Paul Saldanha, *The Church: Mystery of Love and Communion* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2014), 257-258.

[1398] Sandra Mazzolini, "The Church as Mystery, Sacrament, and People of God," in *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study*, ed. Karl Joseph Becker and Ilaria Morali (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 271.

[1399] Cf. Kasper, „Kirche – Werk des Heiligen Geistes," 34-42.

[1400] Cf. Kasper, „Der christliche Glaube angeschichts der Religionen," 357.

Eucharistic community,[1401] in which the Eucharist is not only a representative sign of an existing unity, but an effective and operative sign, that institutes, stabilises and accomplishes this unity.[1402] Asian/Indian churches need to pay serious attention to these three attributes of the Church and harmoniously integrate them in her mission for the world today. Kasper refers to Joachim Gnilka on the relationship between Christ and the Church and agrees that the Church today has a cosmic function as the body of the cosmic Christ who is the *pleroma*.[1403] Her unity and fullness, is a gift and a task in the present, which will be fully realised when God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28).[1404]

Finally, Kasper opines that Christianity in Asia should not be conceived as an entity that is engaged only in soul-saving (*salus animarum*) and church-planting (*plantation ecclesiae*) activities.[1405] Athough these two, including conversion, are significant components of evangelisation, however, they may not be considered as the only goal and objective of the Church's mission.[1406] These are only means to the end that the Church is aiming at - the establishment of God's reign. FABC's Fifth Plenary Assembly categorically states: "Our challenge is to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: to promote justice, peace, love, compassion, equality and brotherhood in these Asian realities. In short, it is to work to make the Kingdom of God a reality."[1407] Kasper reckons that "it is the fundamental task of pastoral work to keep the Church alive into the future" and engage in the "transmission of the faith to a continuous present".[1408] Finally, the universal mission of the Church is to make Jesus Christ known and loved, so that many more may come to know Jesus Christ in their personal lives and experience his saving mysteries.

[1401] Cf. Kasper, „Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem II Vatikanischen Konzil," 276.

[1402] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Skandal einer Trennung: Offene Kommunion als Zeichen der Hoffnung," in *Christen wollen das eine Abendmahl*, Heinrich Bacht (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1971), 43.

[1403] Cf. Joachim Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Herder: Freiburg, 1994), 326 – 343.

[1404] Cf. Kasper, „Der ekkesologische Charakter der nichtkatholischen Kirche," 55.

[1405] Some traces of this double-activity as the mission of the Church is highlighted by Pope St. John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 49, where he indicates that there is much to be done in implanting and developing the Church, and for much of the human race, it is yet to begin.

[1406] For more on response to evangelisation, see Peter C. Phan, "Conversion and Discipleship as Goals of the Church's Mission," in *In Our Own Tongues*, Peter C. Phan, 45-61 and for more on goal and mission of the Church, see Peter C. Phan, "Proclamation of the Reign of God as Mission of the Church: What For, To Whom, By Whom, With Whom, and How?" in *In Our Own Tongues*, 32-44.

[1407] Rosales and Arévalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia,* Vol. I, 275.

[1408] Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 10. Also see Arnold, *Seelsorge aus der Mitt der Heilsgeschichte*, 178-194.

5.4.5 Asian/Indian Spirit Christology

There is a great need to develop an Asian/Indian Christology if Asians/Indians want to effectively proclaim the universal salvation and the unique mediation of Jesus Christ in the world. In this regards, Wilfred envisages the need to develop Asian public theology. He says:

> In the context of multi-religious and multi-cultural societies with fast transformation in the field of culture, economy, politics, etc., theology needs to interrogate itself regarding its responsibilities to the larger world… Asian public theological reflection needs to be open-ended and should begin from the world. It will endeavour to respond with others to the question and issues thrown up from the life-situation of the people and societies.[1409]

He hopes for a real encounter with Jesus Christ and the appropriate Indian Christology emerging out of this encounter. He further warns that an Indian Christology should neither be an addition, an appendix, nor an alternative version of general Christology. Such an Indian Christology should primarily focus on the life style of Jesus; especially his path of suffering and this should be realisable without using exclusive language of uniqueness.[1410]

Kasper uses keywords like secularisation, autonomisation and rationalisation in describing and diagnosing this present world. Transmission of the Christian faith in such a modernised and secularised world is facing an acute problem, as traditions are critically questioned. He further proposes that the goal and the objective of the transmission of faith is not, and should not be indoctrination, but rather, faith that is personally and convincingly acquired which can answer modern queries, criticisms, and challenges.[1411] Asian theology should therefore, explore those possibilities of transmitting mature faith, which in turn, should lead to personal conviction.

No Christology can be complete or claim absoluteness, argues Wilfred, since according to him all Christologies are limited and fragmentary. He therefore sees the need for

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[1409] Wilfred, "On the Future of Asian Theology," 21-22.

[1410] Cf. Wilfred, "Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness," 672.

[1411] Cf. also Kasper, „Tradierung und Vermittling als systematisch-theologisches Problem," 33, 50.

contemplative pluralism.[1412] Contemplative pluralism, according to Wilfred, means unity in plurality, but this unity is not "to be viewed as something already available or given (classical Christology, Chalcedonian formula, theocentrism, etc.) but as something hidden and forming the object of our continuous quest that is refreshing and transforming."[1413] Fostering contemplative pluralism which Wilfred proposes would be a great challenge for Christology, especially in the Asian/Indian religious scenario.

Religion and culture are needed to be seen as being dynamic and a healthy interaction between them could result in healthy transformation in various social, religious and cultural spheres. Christianity in Asia/India, when encountered by other religions and cultures, could on the one hand, lead to a critical assessment of themselves, and in turn, be led to a deeper understanding of itself and its mission. Wilfred argues that "the Community of believers living in determined socio-cultural milieu and in the context of a religiously pluralistic world should be considered as the active subject of inculturation and dialogue (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 63)."[1414] Asian/Indian Christology has the duty and responsibility to incarnate the Gospel in the soil (cf. AG 19-22). Kasper gladly encourages this proposal of Wilfred and further suggests that a new dialogue between Church and culture is needed from both sides.[1415]

What India needs today is a communion of different religions, groups and ideologies, which has unity and inter-relationship as its ideals.[1416] This is also what Jesus desired from his disciples – a community of universal communion and solidarity. Wilfred has rightly affirmed that such communion and unity is attainable only through "local frameworks of unity," and not through those that are borrowed.[1417] Therefore, Wilfred duly expresses Christianity's indebtedness to Hindu language, which has inturn helped Christianity to understand its worship and doctrines in a deeper way.[1418]

[1412] Cf. Wilfred, *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies*, 189f.

[1413] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 92-93.

[1414] Wilfred, "Some Heuristic Propositions on the Relationship of Christianity to Non-Christian Religions and Cultures." 229.

[1415] Cf. Kasper „Kirche und Kultur: Evangelisierung und Inkulturation," 162.

[1416] Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Ecumenism as a Movement of Justice: Focus on Asia," *VJTR* 58, no. 9 (1994): 575.

[1417] Wilfred, "Ecumenism as a Movement of Justice," 582-583.

[1418] Cf. Wilfred, "Hindu Heritage and Indian Christianity," 86. Also cf. Bror Tiliander, *Christian and Hindu Terminology: A Study in their Mutual Relations with Specific Reference to the Tamil Area* (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksell, 1974).

Religion, when considered as a function, becomes nothing more than a structure that keeps repeating its beliefs, rituals, and practises through the course of time. This no doubt, helps the maintenance of religions and their *status quo*. On the other hand, if religion becomes a performance or *anubhava* (experience), it can "respond to those questions and issues which various systems in society have raised but have left unanswered."[1419] Moreover, one needs to understand that religion is not an end in itself but rather a channel to something higher, a medium leading towards the greatest mystery of life, God. He is the bond that unites all religions, giving meaning and sustenance to them.[1420]

Kasper's Spirit Christology has something very important to contribute to the Asian/Indian Christology discussed above. Kasper speaks about the Spirit's activity in Jesus and Spirit's working in Christian lives and he associated this with the idea of baptism. He considers the baptism of Jesus as an archetype of what happens ever anew to one who is baptised in the name of Jesus Christ: "the Spirit of God lays hold of the baptised person and gives him a share in the eschatological divine sonship."[1421] He further certifies that the Spirit of God is not something that makes extraordinary things possible, but on the contrary, enables one to do the ordinary in an extraordinary way. To be led by the Spirit and to live in the Spirit, according to Kasper, is to live for God and not for things that are passing away, and to be open for God and to serve and love one's neighbour.[1422] He believes that when God gradually dies away in the hearts of men, eventually even man experiences spiritual gradual death in his life.[1423] It is Kasper's strong conviction that the prayer of Jesus 'May all be one' cannot come to nothing. God's Spirit will bring to the finish, what it has already begun.[1424] Asian/Indian Christology is called to take this prayer of Jesus seriously and ardently strive for this unity.

As a climax, Kasper testifies that "Jesus is the author, leader, pioneer ('*archegos*') of life, salvation and faith (Acts 3.15; 5.31; Heb 2.10; 12.2)"[1425] and the Church is only the dawn

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[1419] Wilfred, "Asian Religious Pluralism and Higher Education," 38.
[1420] Cf. Wilfred, "Christianity and Religious Cosmopolitanism," 114.
[1421] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 204.
[1422] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 205-206.
[1423] Cf. Kasper, „Kirche – Werk des Heiligien Geistes," 31-32.
[1424] Cf. Kasper, „Ein Heer, ein Glaube, eine Taufe," 238.
[1425] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 263.

of the Kingdom of God, an effective and accomplished sacramental sign of this Kingdom. The Spirit, the loving bond between the Father and the Son, makes man open to God and his neighbour and it is this Spirit of Jesus Christ that enables man to come boldly and confidently before God. Kasper strongly believes that one day we too "will rub our eyes in amazement that God's Spirit has broken through the seemingly insurmountable walls that divide us and given us new ways through to each other and a new communion,"[1426] and he hopes that we shall not have to wait another few centuries.

The Spirit-led Christian lives between the 'already' and 'not-yet' of this kingdom.[1427] Therefore, Kasper believes, that the Christian life of the Spirit is one of hope and expectation for the complete transformation of the world into God's kingdom of freedom.[1428] It is fitting to conclude with the encouraging call of Pope Francis to all Christians, to go forth and offer to everyone the life of Jesus Christ. He repeats to the entire Church what he often told the priest and laity of Buenos Aires:

> I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsession and procedures… More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe.[1429]

Kasper acknowledges that religions today, including Christianity are a mixture of sublimity and holiness, beautiful and good, with errors, repression, superstition. She requires constant purification so that the sanctity of God and the dignity of men are experienced in and through her.[1430] He also agrees with the fact that today the churches in the West are experiencing spiritual dryness, emptiness, and decadence in faith. Asia

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[1426] Cf. Kasper, "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," 21. Cf. also Kasper, „Ein Heer, ein Glaube, eine Taufe," 238.

[1427] Cf. Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 124. Kasper refers to the Church Fathers who expressed the historical nature of the Church by comparing her to a ship in the stormy sea of the world, steering through the rough waters towards her eschatological destination. Aslo see Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche. Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Salzburg: Müller, 1964), 272-303; Hermann J. Vogt, *Bilder der frühen Kirche: Bildworte der Bibel bei den Kirchenvätern* (München: Wewel, 1993), 24-36.

[1428] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 205-210.

[1429] Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49.

[1430] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 123.

seems to be a very important continent, especially for Pope Francis, and he believes that the future of the Church, to a great extent, lies in the hands of Asian churches. The Church incarnate in India, bestowed with all means of salvation by Christ, is filled with zeal for the transmission of the Christian faith. Though she has its local features, she is the concrete manifestation of the one Church of Jesus Christ, and she will joyfully continue to proclaim the universality of Christian salvation, which has a greater universal value to everyone. She is God's leaven and God's gift for the people of Asia, making possible a personal saving encounter with Jesus Christ. Kasper acknowledges that while unity is a gift of God, we should believe that the Word of God through the Holy Spirit becomes an efficacious sign and the source of this unity.[1431]

The Church in Asia/India co-exists in harmony and peace with members of numerous other religions and denominations. All that is good in them is regarded as *praeparatio evangelica* by the Catholic Church. Today, it is the task of the Church in India to be a strong/deep 'Christian witness' so that all those who give witness to the love of Christ in their own respective religion at the level of *praeparatio evangelica*, may be one day moved with the burning desire to be ministers of Christ Jesus. The truth, in which the Holy Spirit leads and guides us, cannot err or be false. The Spirit cannot contradict itself, it rather leads one in the absolute truth, and the truth of the Gospel is greater and deeper than all the interpreted dogmas of the Church.[1432] God, in Jesus Christ, is the absolute truth, who grants real and lasting peace, achieving harmony and co-existence.[1433] To convince the world of this undeniable fact is the task of ecumenism and dialogue. Kasper hopes that extra efforts will be made especially by the Church in India and also by the universal Church to treat ecumenism and dialogue as a pastoral priority.[1434] Counting on these efforts, Kasper believes that one fine day the world will come to acknowledge that God is all in all, and that we all are justified and saved through Jesus Christ his son, and this will result in universal peace and unity.

[1431] Cf. Walter Kasper, „Wort Gottes – Quelle der Einheit," *Erbe und Auftrag* 80 (2004): 7.

[1432] Cf. Walter Kasper, „‚Vom Geist und Wesen des Katholizismus.' Bedeutung, Wirkungsgeschichte und Aktualität von Johann Sebastian Dreys und Johann Adam Möhlers Wesenbestimmung des Katholizismus," *ThQ* 183 (2003): 210.

[1433] Cf. Kasper, „Die Kirche als Ort der Wahrheit," 120.

[1434] Cf. Kasper, „Ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe," 235.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has attempted to design certain working principles based on the Spirit Christology of Walter Kasper, as a help in proclaiming the uniqueness and the cosmic salvation of Jesus Christ. The positive elements seen in other religions are acknowledged and respected since they reflect the values of the Kingdom of God found in its totality in the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus Christ. The Church is called to be more prophetic and authentic in her essential role as the sacrament of the cosmic salvation of Jesus Christ. The Church can be so only when she credibly and convincingly re-tells the story of the New Testament and the different mysteries of Jesus Christ, whose life was centred and rooted in God. Today what Christianity requires is not just people who glorify and exalt Jesus, but people who are convinced of his life and love towards creation and humanity, and imitate him. Love is the essence of Christian faith and Christian life.

We acknowledge that all religions attempt to approach the divine and are paths through which different people seek their personal salvation. This fact is acknowledged by the Church and on this ground she respects other religions. However, the Second Vatican Council is clear when it declares that we must "learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth," and at the same time "try to furbish these treasures, set them free, and illuminate them in the light of the Holy Gospel" (AG 11; see also NA 2). We should "through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love... recognise, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men and women" and at the same time we "ever must proclaim Christ, who is 'the way the truth and the life' (Jn 14.6), in whom men and women may find the fullness of religious life" (NA 2). The Church should continue its attempt in imparting the cosmic salvation of Jesus Christ in its fullness so that one day the whole world will acknowledge that the God of Jesus Christ has saved the world through his son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

AN EVALUATION

Introduction

This theological and systematic work has attempted to explore one of the highly debated themes in the history of Christianity and religions, namely, the unique mediation and cosmic salvation of Jesus Christ. In the course of this research, we have tried to closely analyse this argument from the Asian and Western perspectives, sometimes juxtaposing them. It should be admitted, however, that simply juxtaposing these two approaches and systems is not the best and durable solution. Asian and Western approaches to theologising are different, the former being more integrative and contextual, while the latter, being guided by philosophy, is more systematic and analytic.

Before drawing conclusions, we present a brief summary cum critical assessment of the christological discussions undertaken so far.

Walter Kasper and Spirit Christology

Kasper, throughout his christological reflections, has always affirmed the definitiveness, the absoluteness, the uniqueness, and the universal salvation in and through Jesus Christ. For him, Jesus, in his nature and being, is the *Logos* of God in person.[1435] Kasper affirms that it is only in Jesus Christ that the final meaning and fulfilment of humanity is realised, and it is only in Jesus Christ that human beings and human existence are finally understood and sustained.[1436] Jesus Christ as *concretum universale* is, for Kasper, the foundation and measure of every theology and religion. As God he is universal and omnipresent but as man he is the concrete realisation in human history. Jesus Christ is the full and definitive answer of Christianity; in him all separation is demolished. Hence, Jesus Christ remains the key, the centre and the goal of one human history.[1437] By articulating and emphasising such statements, some might argue that Kasper seems to be asserting Western absoluteness and his adherence to a dogmatic frame of mind.

[1435] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 169f.
[1436] Cf. Kasper, „Gottes gegenwart in Jesus Christus," 327.
[1437] Cf. Kasper, „Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen," 110, 116,124.

Kasper was not pleased with the Christology of Ratzinger, since Ratzinger started from Platonic dialectic of visible-invisible. Kasper, instead, shifted the emphasis on the historicity of Jesus and has eventually tried to interweave the historical Jesus with nature, in a definite society, in a particular historical context, time and culture. Some consider that Kasper, being a dogmatic theologian, should concentrate more on Logos Christology (Christology from above) rather than Anthropological Christology (Christology from below).

Western Christology, generally understood, seems to be very much preoccupied with philosophical categories and linguistic articulations. Asians frequently see a certain closed mind-set of Western Christology/Christianity, in the sense that it hesitates to enrich itself with the religious experiences and knowledge of people of other faiths in the world. Furthermore, it seemingly appears that the European religious syncretism has marred to some extent the real image of Jesus and his universal message of the Kingdom of God. Boff has pointed out that the cosmovision of the Empire and the Kingdom of God are fused and interwoven in a way which leads to a strange synthesis, which is:

> A curious mixture and interdependency of God and gold, material wealth and salvation, earthly property and heaven, charity and cruelty, love and violence, enslavement and emancipation, military power and spiritual power, church and state.[1438]

There are questions that still seem legitimate today: Has colonising Christianity been in any way helpful? Has it helped Christianity to review itself from within? It has been noted that, "Christianity was seen by some as the religion of the foreigners and conquerors, and Christ as invader, a kind of religious Julius Caesar."[1439] That the result of colonisation by the West has been the disfiguration of the personality of Jesus in the hearts and minds of Asians is a constant complaint of the Asian churches. Efforts are therefore underway by the Church in Asia/India to re-discover the true image of Jesus, especially from the Asian/Indian perspective.

[1438] Leonardo Boff and Virgilio Elizondo, "Christ in Asia: Some Aspects of the struggles," *CONC* 2 (1993): viii. See also Harvey Perkins, "Four Bible Studies on Development in the Asian Context," *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 21, no.1 (1980): 82.

[1439] Samuel Rayan, "Hindu Perceptions of Christ in the Nineteenth Century," *CONC* 2 (1993): 13.

The Theological Ventures of Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred

The task of Christology today, according to Michael Amaladoss, is not to carry Jesus to where he is absent, but rather to discover him where he really is, especially in mysterious ways not known to us. Amaladoss proposes inclusivistic pluralism as the solution to the issue concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, his universal salvation and the mysterious working of his Spirit in other religions. Felix Wilfred, on the other hand, discovering two major strands in the Indian theological settings, i.e., the spiritual quest and the struggle of the people for liberation, opts for contemplative pluralism[1440] as a method to proceed beyond "imperialistic universalism" and an "annihilating particularism."[1441] He emphasises the need for a contemplative approach to pluralism rather than an epistemic one. Accordingly, his contemplative pluralism does not deny the need for unity in plurality, but maintains that this unity is not to be considered as a goal in itself, rather, something that forms the object of our continuing quest, thereby refreshing and transforming us.

Amaladoss has argued that if, according to *Ecclesia in Asia*, it is true and realistic that people in Asia "Contemplating Jesus in his human nature… find their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfiled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered" (EA 14), then why is it that "there is no big rush among the Asian people to become disciples of Jesus and to join the Church?"[1442] This seems to us debatable because the veracity of this statement of *Ecclesia in Asia* need not be realised in the Asian people alone in the first instance, nor can we expect immediate fruitions. It could be similarly counter-argued that atheists do not believe in God even though it is generally accepted world-wide by every religion that God is the fulfilment of all our hopes. Such reasoning could be applied in many other areas of our life, especially in the case of health. Smoking and drinking to excess are injurious to health and even though people are aware of this knowledge and have realised it, they still find it hard to change their unhealthy lifestyle or habits.[1443] Therefore, even Kasper in his second interview, often used the word conviction because

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[1440] Wilfred, "Christological Pluralism," 93.

[1441] Ananta Kumar Giri, "Rethinking Pluralism and Rights: Meditative Verbs of Co-Realisations and the Challenges of Transformations," in *The Democratic Predicament. Cultural Diversity in Europe and India*, ed. Jyotirmaya Tripathy and Sudarsan Padmanabhan (New Delhi: Routledge, 2013), 107.

[1442] Michael Amaladoss, "The Image of Jesus in the Church in Asia," *EAPR* 37, 3 (2000): 234.

[1443] Athappilly, *Jesus Christ, the Saviour*, 112.

he himself was convinced that, convictions grown from deep faith experiences could bring people much closer to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Good News for men and women of every age and generation who search for truth, meaning of life, and purpose of human existence. He is the centre of human history and cosmic salvation. Though *Ecclesia in Asia* states that Jesus is the fulfilment of the "peoples of Asia," the Indian Theological Association had already extended this continental parameter to a global perspective by articulating that Jesus Christ is the one "who brings fulfilment to all persons."[1444] He is the fullness of salvation and "the reunion of values otherwise scattered at various degrees and of all partial truths into one fullness."[1445] As far as our knowledge goes, Amaladoss has not made any counter remarks so far to such a declaration, initiated and motivated by the Indian Theological Association.

Amaladoss has further argued that one does not have the right to determine the extent of the activity of the Holy Spirit in other religions, and this sounds reasonable. Since it is a mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, complete knowledge concerning this is known only to God. But Kasper would argue that we could, to some extent, determine the real presence and the effective working of the Holy Spirit in members of other faiths by discerning the veracity of the Spirit's presence in them. This would be clearly evident especially through their life style: the Gospel values they inculcate and practice, and the spiritual fruits that they produce. Understanding the Asian mentality in this regard would indeed be challenging for Western minds but certainly not for Asians themselves. Even the Holy See has sometimes found difficulties in understanding the Asian ways of theologising, and especially the inculturation of Christianity in Asia. A brief list of cautionary statements issued by the CDF has been presented in the first chapter (see 1.3.2.3) though one might feel that such statements, in some cases, were necessary and helpful. However, Kasper believes that attempts should be made by Asian theologians to recognise the authentic presence and the working of the Holy Spirit in members of other faiths.

[1444] Cf. Statement of the Indian Theological Association (April 1998) on "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India."

[1445] M. Dhavamony, "The Convergence of World Religions and Christocentrism," *Studia Missionalia* 52 (2003): 282.

Wilfred has challenged whether it would be possible to preach and interpret Jesus in such a way that people of other religions need not discontinue their spiritual journey to encounter the person of Jesus Christ. Kasper would argue that genuine and authentic faith in Jesus Christ would definitely lead one to faith in God the Father and to faith in the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. What the members of other faiths require is an inner illumination to accept the revelation of God and the mystery of Jesus Christ, prompted to them by the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit in them. Both these positions seem to pose certain tension and hence answers to these queries depend on the personal life, conviction and decision of the individual.

Another important question posed by Amaladoss is: Who can credibly show and prove that Jesus (or Christianity, or the Church) actually fulfils the 'authentic values' of other religions? (EA 14). Logically argued, each religion can regard itself as the fulfilment of other religions, considering others as peripheral or even irrelevant, eventually leading to comparative approaches to religions. To avoid such *a priori* affirmations and the divinization of the humanity of Jesus, Amaladoss, and even Wilfred, emphasise that salvation is a Trinitarian action and it is only God who saves.

It could be argued here that many in Indian history who were staunch Hindus, have converted to Christianity, or have found meaning and fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Devasahayam Pillai, born into a Hindu family but later converted to Christianity is today declared Blessed by the Catholic Church and is considered a martyr of the Christian faith. Many others also converted to Christianity like Brahmabandhav Upadhyay and Narayan Waman Tilak. All of these gradually became aware of, and were convinced of the truth that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of human life and existence, and in spite of constant resistance, they did not find it difficult to give up their respective religions and convert to Christianity. Many more, although formally did not convert to Christianity, they however, integrated a lot of Christian principles in their reform movements for the Indian society. Kasper affirms the perspective that it is the task of Christianity and the Church in general to always facilitate such experiences, where members of other faiths come to realise and are convinced that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of human life and existence. Conversion of heart and reception of baptism, as the fruit of our evangelisation, may not be immediate because, although evangelisation is our work, conversion is God's work.

The Indian Theological Association, speaking on the "Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India" emphasises that:

> For the Christian believer, Jesus Christ is the perfect symbol of God who brings fulfillment to all persons in their world through his words and works, signs and wonders. He is unique to the Christian in that he is the definitive, though non-exhaustive symbol of God-experience in the world. But Jesus' uniqueness does not necessarily displace symbols in other religions… The vision of all the saving movements in the world as manifestations of the one divine mystery, of the one Word and the one Spirit of God, urges us to be open to the religious experience of others and to dialogue with them.[1446]

From this premise, Amaladoss argues that the activity of the Word is not reduced to the activity of Jesus before, during, and after the life of Jesus, and that the Word is active also in other religions. He further contests that the uniqueness of Jesus as Saviour depends on the fact that he is God and hence, to avoid any further confusion, he concludes that God is indeed the unique Saviour. St. Paul's letter to the Colossians makes it clear that, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:19) and "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him" (Col 2:9-10). Through the Word/Son God became man in Jesus and Jesus himself affirmed that he and the Father are one and that the Father lives in him.

The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) clearly declared that Jesus Christ, the Son, was true God and co-eternal with the Father, since he is of the same substance of the Father (*homoousios*). This Council thus affirmed the strict divinity of the Son of God and declared the consubstantiality of God the Son with God the Father. The Chalcedonian Council (AD 451) further affirmed the unity of two natures (humanity and divinity) in the one person of Jesus Christ (hypostatic union). Hence, any separation of these two natures is not permitted. Since Jesus is God, the Incarnate Son of God, he remains the only Saviour of the world and whoever is saved, is saved only through him, and in him. It is difficult to comprehend why Amaladoss remarks that "when we interpret such exclusive and universal statements about Jesus, we have to ask whether such and such a title is given to him in so far as he is divine or in so far as he is human."[1447] We are here talking

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[1446] Amaladoss, "The Image of Jesus in the Church in Asia," 235.

[1447] Michael Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ as the Only Saviour and Mission," *The Japan Mission Journal* 55, no. 4 (2001), 219-226.

about Jesus Christ as the universal Saviour and therefore, the need to assess the designation "Jesus, the Cosmic Saviour" insofar he is divine or human, does not arise.

Wilfred also argues that we need to avoid exclusive language and the use of ontological categories and that the language of uniqueness may be significant and relevant to the West, but not to the Asian/Indian mind. Kasper counter-argues that constantly pointing to the West, when referring to the use of the language of uniqueness, is no longer relevant, since it is the universal Church that holds the truth of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and in high esteem, proclaims him as the cosmic saviour. Scripture reveals this truth and the Church believes that Jesus is God the Son, and that God has saved the world through his Son. Kasper further adds that Scripture is not a Holy book that belongs only to the West.

If Jesus Christ is the perfect and definitive symbol of God, who brings fulfilment to all peoples, and through whom we have attained salvation, we cannot argue that other saving spiritual movements are manifestations of the divine mystery in the same way as Jesus. The vision of Indian theologians, and perhaps also of Amaladoss and Wilfred, in understanding these manifestations as the revelation "of the one divine mystery, of the one Word and the one Spirit of God" seems to place them on a par with the divine manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, who is unique, perfect and definitive. The Indian Theological Association urges openness to other religious experiences, and to dialogue with them. As we understand it, this call of ITA for dialogue is a request to us Christians to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to our brethren, or, in other words to engage in "telling the story of Jesus."[1448] Such dialogue could lead us to better understand Jesus Christ as the cosmic Saviour and could also present the Church to be the sacrament of salvation and a community of love. However, it is not to be believed that revelation and salvation is complete and perfect only if we engage in inter-religious dialogue. At the same time, it is unthinkable to presume that God has not revealed everything in and through Jesus Christ, but has kept some things hidden and entrusted them to other religions, and hence we (Christians) need to constantly engage in dialogue with other religions in order to ascertain these reserved or concealed truths. Respectfully opening ourselves to the great religious traditions and dialoguing with other world religions, we

[1448] "Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia" was the theme of the Asian Mission Congress (October 18-22, 2006) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. For the message of the participants of this Asian Congress, see "The Message of the Asian Mission Congress" and "Asian Congress on Evangelization," in *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 2002-2006*, Vol. IV, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2007), 273-281.

could enrich our Christian identity and life and together with them practice and promote moral and religious values, thus contributing to total human development.

Finally, the claim of Amaladoss that "the different symbols of different religions and their scriptures, refer to the same Mystery, but reveal different aspects of the mystery… the scriptures of other religions have something to say that I have not heard from my own scriptures"[1449] is an assertion that is insupportable. It should be clear that Jesus Christ is the mediator and fullness of all revelation and that God has revealed himself and plan of salvation in his Word. Hence, Christian faith cannot accept "revelation" that claims to surpass or correct the revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment.[1450] Amaladoss has also claimed that "I can hardly use my scriptures as a criterion to judge the scriptures of other religions."[1451] It could be argued here that if *Logos* has manifested himself fully and finally in Jesus Christ and the same *Logos* has manifested himself, in a similar way, also in other religions, a serious question arises as to why we sometimes find incompatible and inconsistent teachings and messages in other religions even totally contradictory with the Christian teachings? Amaladoss' opinion, therefore, that "the different symbols of different religions and their scriptures, refer to the same Mystery, but reveal different aspects of the mystery"[1452] is unacceptable.

Amaladoss reasons that if salvation is also possible through other religions, then it does not make much sense to speak of being saved better or more easily in Christianity. Acknowledging that salvation is also available in other religions though it is actually salvation in Jesus Christ, but unknown to them, and claiming on this premise, that all religions are equal ways to God and are salvific, sounds fallacious. One could conclude, therefore, that the inclusivistic pluralism proposed by Amaladoss is not the ideal solution in presenting and proclaiming Jesus Christ as the unique and the cosmic saviour.

It is agreed and acknowledged that some elements of the salvation of Christ and the values of Kingdom are also present in other religions but these are neither as complete

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[1449] Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New: Dialogue, Pluralism, and Evangelization in Asia* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 39.

[1450] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part One, Section One, Chapter Two: God Comes to Meet Man, Article I/III, no. 67.

[1451] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 39.

[1452] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 39.

nor as perfect as in Christianity. Therefore, one has to admit the distinction between the salvation seen in Christianity and the salvation offered/understood by other religions, because the salvation offered by Jesus Christ is final and definitive, and is of a specific nature. However, God can make use of other religions as channels of salvific grace, but that does not make them sacraments of salvation in the univocal sense, as of the Church. The universality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his cosmic redemption are absolutely incomparable.

Amaladoss was recently asked to explore the theme of the Uniqueness of Christ in the context of East-West theological dialogue. Besides reflecting on the different aspects of the East-West approach and the Uniqueness of Christ in the Indian perspective, he demonstrated that Jesus is present today through the Word and works through his Spirit. He emphasised that:

> The Indian theologians strongly believe in Jesus Christ as the only saviour of the world. They are also convinced that the Word and the Spirit of God are present and active in the universe and in all peoples, not in some abstract, mysterious way, but in their lives and socio-cultural structures, including religious ones.[1453]

He later called for a sincere and open dialogue between the East and the West and also for the liberation of systematic theology enframed by an outdated scholastic philosophy, which would open new contextual experiences of faith. He is looking forward to the day when Asians will be free to develop their own contextual theologies.

Amaladoss certifies, however, that Indian theologians are often accused of not affirming, or for downplaying Christ as the only saviour, which is, in fact, not very true. In reality, they are reflecting on the mystery of Christ from their multi-religious context and are trying to say something new. It is regrettable that the Indian theologians are neither being listened to, nor are they being understood.[1454] Kasper agrees to this charge of Amaladoss. He feels that the Holy See should also pay heed to what the Asian theologians are suggesting and enter into an amicable dialogue (dialogue *ad intra*) with them. Indian theologians are trying to seek and find the workings of the Holy Spirit in other cultures,

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[1453] Michael Amaladoss, "Uniqueness and Universality of Christ in Cosmic Redemption," *Journal of Indian Theology* 8, no. 2 (2015): 18.

[1454] Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions," 327.

and this is a legitimate goal. Hence, we also need to appreciate the Indian theologians, especially Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred and duly acknowledge their giant contributions: in trying to explain salvation as God's mysterious action in the world reaching out to all humans, in trying to explain the role of other religions in God's plan of salvation and for their theology of dialogue. We hope and believe that during the papacy of Pope Francis, who seems to be more open-minded and pastoral, the chances are greater that the Holy See might view the efforts of Asian/Indian theologians and their theologising with more openness and favour.

Christology in India

Indian Christology, as far as we understand it, tends towards Spirit Christology, beginning from the deeds of God in the Spirit right from the beginning of creation, and the Spirit's mighty presence and working in the salvation history. It considers Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the promises of God, and the giver of this Spirit. Indian theologians further acknowledge the working of the Spirit of God even in other religions. In their understanding "God is Spirit and the earth as the embodiment of the feminine power of God,"[1455] and therefore, God's engagement is seen primarily in terms of the Spirit.

Some Indian theologians consider Jesus not only as the giver of the Spirit but also as the receiver of the Spirit. In so arguing, they are probably trying to shift the focus of the question of the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ on to the Spirit. Such a position, they believe, would provide a new and appealing approach to the question of the uniqueness and universal salvation of Jesus, a decisive issue in the pluralistic context. Spirit Christology is also seen as a practical alternative to justify and affirm the working of the Spirit outside the boundaries of the visible Church. Such a position has let Indian theologians emphasise that the mystery of God is not exhausted in the revelation of Jesus Christ but is also revealed in other religions.[1456] Kasper would, perhaps, accept the argument of establishing the legitimacy of Spirit Christology by Indian theologians as

[1455] Cf. V. Devasahayam, "Indian Contribution to Contemporary Mission Pneumatology," in *Christianity and Cultures. Shaping Christian Thinking in Context*, ed. David Emmanuel Singh and Bernard C. Farr (London: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

[1456] Cf. Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler, ed., *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

long as such Spirit Christology is understood as complementary to the traditional *Logos* Christology and not as an alternative to it. Christology, as Kasper proposes, should be complementary. As discussed earlier, he himself calls for a "Christology of reciprocity" or a "Christology of complementarity," a Christology which attempts to bridge both the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. However, he would seriously question the permissibility of shifting the focus from the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ to the universality of the Spirit, in order to provide a new and appealing approach to the question of the uniqueness and universal salvation of Jesus Christ. He makes it clear that though the Spirit is at work also in other religions and their members, it is always the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The current socio-religious situation in Asia presents a clear contrast between popular religion, on the one hand, which is open, flexible and universal in its spirit, and a a religious fundamentalism, on the other hand, which is sectarian and closed. A constant attitude of conflict seems to exist between these two groups: fundamentalistic religions and the popular religions. A similar frame of mind also appears to be prevalent when the Eastern and Western approaches to religions are compared (We have elaborately examined these two approaches). Even in the Indian scenario, there seems to prevail a similar situation and understanding between Christianity, which considers itself to be more open and flexible, and the other co-existing religions, which appear to be more fundamentalistic in their teachings and principles.

This disposition is justifiable because the three major religions in India have an ancient religious history, namely, Hinduism (with roots going back 5000 years; the beginning of modern Hinduism can be traced back to 1500 BC, with the arrival of the Aryans), Buddhism (began in India and later spread to other parts of Asia), and Islam (came to India from West Asia).[1457] It is traditionally claimed that Christianity arrived in India around 52 AD, with the visitation of St. Thomas the Apostle, and his missionary zeal of converting people to Christianity, especially in Kerala. This late arrival of Christianity in India has often been challenged with two important questions: first, how can Christianity claim the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ today, when people in India have been practicing their respective religions for thousands of years before Christianity?

[1457] For more on religious identities cf. S. J. Samartha, *One Christ – Many Religions. Towards a Revised Christology* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

Second, how can Christianity claim the hidden working of the Spirit of Jesus in other religions and acknowledge the values of truth found in others, but simultaneously assert and certify the perfection of these values only in Jesus Christ?

Christian theologians, in answering the issue concerning the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ have recourse to the Scriptures, Traditions, the various significant Councils, and also to the magisterial teachings of the Church. The incarnation of *Logos*, the Word of God (without losing his godliness), his life, passion, death, and resurrection have a unique and significant meaning and they play a predominant role in the salvation history of the world. The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) recognized and affirmed the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis. Later, the Chalcedonian creed (451 AD) defined the state of these two natures existing in one person as "without confusion, without change, without division and without separation."

In answering the question concerning the hidden working of the Holy Spirit in other religions, Christian theologians have recourse to two significant terminologies – '*Logoi Spermatikoi*' (fragments of the one *Logos* at work everywhere in nature, history and in the world, who appeared in his fullness in Jesus Christ)[1458] and '*Semina Verbi*' (conviction long rooted in the tradition that the seeds of the Word referred to by the Church Fathers and extended, especially by the Second Vatican Council, to include religions and cultures of non-Christian people). The Second Vatican Council clearly states that the Holy Spirit works effectively even outside the visible structures and boundaries of the Church (cf. LG 13), making use of these *Semina Verbi*, that constitute a kind of common soteriological root present in all religions.

These interpretations appear highly dogmatic to the Asian/Indian mind and are hence unappealing. Often, there are counter-questions from other non-Christian religions, such as: "Would Christianity accept the use of *Logoi Spermatikoi* and *Semina Verbi* if other non-Christian religions had to use them in establishing the uniqueness of their respective religions?" or "Would Christianity accept Hinduism or Buddhism as the ultimate religion, and Christianity as *praeparatio evangelica*, yet to hear the message of this one true religion?" Similar questions and claims do not seem to have ultimate and definite answers.

[1458] Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 17.

Kasper maintains that one's strong conviction in Jesus Christ is one of the surest ways to answer these queries. He himself is convinced that in the modern world intellectual arguments alone are not sufficient. Here, Kasper is in no way downplaying the significance of the Scriptures, Traditions and the magisterial teachings. To the first disciples who asked Jesus, "Where are you staying?" Jesus only answered "Come and see" (Jn 1:38-39). They came and they saw where Jesus was staying and they remained with him; they were gradually convinced that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and they steadily brought others to him. Such was the humble beginning of the discipleship of Jesus and the history of Christianity.

One could also argue from the point of truth – Jesus as the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). Christianity depends on the person and work of Jesus Christ, God's revelation in history. It is in him and through him that we find the meaning and purpose of human life and existence. Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation and in him were all things created, in heaven and on earth (Col 1:15-16). There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). This is God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ who is the absolute truth and the only way to the Father. The central tenet of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is the one and the universal mediator between God and man,[1459] the absolute truth, not yet universally accepted.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI believes that the Holy Spirit puts words in the mouth of the speaker and opens the ears of the listener to receive Jesus as Lord. He rightly said, "It (truth) has to be searched for, discovered, revealed and transmitted, but can never be designed just spontaneously or according to one's own plans, aspirations and theories… we are not masters of the truth but rather its disciples."[1460]

Mutual Inclusivism and Ecumenical Christology as an Alternative

Indian Theologians feel that the emergence and the intensification of fundamentalist religious trends and attitudes have sometimes opposed the spirit of openness, a specific

[1459] M. Dhavamony, "The Absoluteness of Jesus Christ and of Christianity," *Studia Missionalia* 48 (1999): 113.

[1460] Z. Grocholewski, "'Be Excellent, Be Catholic!' The Mission of Catholic Higher Education for New Evangelization," *Seminarium* LIII (2013), 1-2, 39-52. See specially 47.

feature that characterises the Asian popular religious traditions. The specific characteristic of popular religions, particularly in Asia is that, it involves the entire person - with feelings, aspirations, trust and hope, as he/she engages himself/herself with the mystery of life. The religiosity of the people, as Wilfred puts it, "is rich in symbolism, in stories and myths; through them, people interpret their experience, analyse, and understand society and affirm themselves as a community."[1461]

Wilfred has tried to show how the orientations of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Gaudium et Spes* vibrate and animate Asian concerns. Here we do not find triumphalism and self-righteousness, which are the major obstacles to witnessing the Gospel. Instead, we find a humble recognition that the Church is groping and struggling with the rest of humanity,[1462] and that it has its own weakness among its members (cf. GS 43). Amaladoss also subscribes to this. Further, Wilfred has pointed out that the Church has sometimes failed to be on the side of the poor and in so far she is not on the side of the poor, she cannot be on the side of God.

What is significant for Asians is not only what the Second Vatican Council has taught. More important is the "approach and orientation it adapted to the mystery of God, the world and humanity."[1463] The Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church held at Hong Kong on March 5, 1977, rightly declared, "If the Asian churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future."[1464] Peter C. Phan states that the self-discovery of the Asian churches as Asian churches, capable of self-government, self-support, self-propagation and self-theologising, was achieved by both 'receiving' and 'subverting' Vatican II, by following the Council's inspiration and going beyond it, under the guidance of FABC.[1465]

Pluralism in India demands that Christianity has to acknowledge the co-existence of other religions and its encounter with them. Besides harmoniously dialoguing with the members of other religious traditions, Christianity must also realise its basic and

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[1461] Wilfred, "Popular Religion and Asian Contextual Theologising," 149.

[1462] Cf. Wilfred, "Asian Christianity and Modernity," 191-206.

[1463] Wilfred, "The Reception of Vatican II in a Multireligious Continent," 120.

[1464] Rosales and Arévalo, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. I, 70.

[1465] Peter C. Phan, "'Reception' or 'Subversion' of Vatican II by the Asian Churches? A New Way of Being Church in Asia," in *Vatican II: Forty Years Later*, College Theology Society, Annual Volume 51, ed. William Madges (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 48.

distinctive feature, emanating from the person of Jesus Christ. By doing so, we are not rejecting the religious and moral values found in other religions. On the contrary, we constantly remind ourselves and also try to unfold to the members of other religions, that all that has value and all that is true and good in them points to Jesus Christ, the truth. Since diversity and plurality is predominant in India (diversity and variety, positively understood as richness and fruitfulness), today there is a need to promote 'mutual inclusivism.'

What does one understand by the expression 'mutual inclusivism?' In general, 'mutual inclusivism' should be understood in the context of the plurality where elements of truth and sanctification are found in diversity of ways. It aims at fostering our (Christian) religious, moral and cultural values in society without compromising them, however, respecting the otherness of the other religious traditions. Today, each religion claims to be superior and unique to all other religions. Mutual inclusivism does not affirm the superiority of each religious tradition; instead, in a certain sense it admits that each religion is unique. By doing so, mutual inclusivism intends to recognise only plurality (the state of being plural), and clearly avoids to advocate religious pluralism (belief that different religious worldviews are equally valid, acceptable and salvific).

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in other religious traditions (NA 2) and attributes it to the active presence of God working through his Word Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit (Dialogue and Proclamation 17). Since we (Christians) believe that Jesus Christ is the absolute truth and goodness of God and the only way to the Father (Jn 14:6), in whom God has definitively revealed himself to humanity (Heb 1:2), it could be presumed that other religious traditions lack in varying degrees, the full understanding and insight of the divine Trinitarian mysteries.

The approach taken by mutual inclusivism should be, on the one hand, mutual, which means we (Christianity) should try to be correlative and interactive with other religions, with their moral and cultural values, identifying what is true and good in them, and on the other hand, without being exclusive, consider members of other faiths as co-pilgrims and co-participants in the universal salvation offered by Jesus Christ. Besides radiating the divine spark that is in us by witnessing an authentic Christian life, mutual inclusivism

attempts to enable others also to be open to this divine revelation, thus creating space even for them to be sharers of this divine life through their personal commitment to Jesus. In this encounter of dialogue, the members of other faith traditions should be enabled to see their religious and moral values concretised in Jesus Christ. Therefore, mutual inclusivism should be dialogical in its approach and must avoid exclusivism, and even pluralism, such as inclusive pluralism, fundamental pluralism and, the idea of universal equality of religions. Finally, mutual inclusivism should aim for the convergence of different religious traditions, guiding them towards one ultimate truth, the God of Jesus Christ.

The Trinity is the perfect model for such mutual union and communion, as Father, Son and Spirit are united by mutual love and harmonious equality, respecting the dignity of each person. Basing our hopes on this mutual union of the Trinity, we too mutually look forward to the fulfilment of God's economy of salvation through his Son Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the universal cosmic centre, and genuine mutual inclusivism could lead to the convergence of the world religions towards Christ. Jesus Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil the deification of all human beings in the all-emerging love of the one God. God envisages a harmonious society of perfected beings under the sway of Christ and his Spirit,[1466] so that at the end God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28).

Today, Christology should take an ecumenical/pastoral approach in its dealings with the world religions. It needs to explore the hidden differences, sometimes subsumed under a mass of comprehensive knowledge called the truth. Often such truth-claims turn out to be conflicting issues between different religious traditions, until one willingly yields or modifies one's position to accommodate the other. Christology, in being ecumenical/pastoral, needs to highlight some basic universal truths such as: universal conviction of the importance of the Holy (God), the spiritual dimension of man (soul) besides his physical dimension (body), man's quest for goodness and truth, and his capacity to love and forgive. Ecumenical/Pastoral Christology has to ground these elements in the historical person of Jesus Christ, in whom all these truths are witnessed in fullness and perfection. This would eventually contribute to the union and communion of human beings, further giving rise to the union and communion of human beings with the

[1466] Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Christianity and Other Religions* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964), 141f.

divine. Besides, the doctrines of incarnation, of redemption, and salvation could significantly help and encourage this desired convergence, in spite of the widely existing differences.

Jesus Christ is unique because "he is the way by which God restores his human creation and the whole of creation to a wholeness of relationship with him."[1467] Christ, the cosmic saviour, "renovator of the whole universe – of nature and life, of thought and morals,"[1468] needs to take concrete form in every culture and religious tradition so that he becomes universal, belongs to every human being, and is available to the whole of humanity. The values of the Gospel and the Kingdom are already present in other religions (though not to a perfect degree). It is now the task of ecumenical/pastoral Christology to discover Jesus who is also present in these religions, and in Asian history, and to keep him at the centre of human life and Christian mission. Although the Christ-event itself is a mystery, we somehow need to make this 'Christ-event' comprehensive, relevant and operative in human history.[1469] The Asian/Indian churches, while adapting such ecumenical/pastoral Christology, will have to confront two different situations and correspondingly play two different roles: as allies with other religions it has to fight against atheism and all the vices and evils in the world, and as opponents, claim and uphold the uniqueness of Christ and his offer of cosmic salvation. We consider that this is possible only when Christology in India and the person of Jesus become relevant to the social and religious struggles of the masses, rather than just remain as an academic exercise or pursuit. We should not only study Christology but live Christology because proclamation of Christ and practicing of the gospel values are both linked – closely and intrinsically.

One should not consider Christocentrism as something opposed to, or distinct from, theocentrism because, wherever Christ is, God is present and wherever Christ works, it is always God's will that is realised. God has manifested his general revelation to all and has invited all men to accept his gift of salvation (responding to and accepting this gift with free will), offered through his Son Jesus. Hence, we could consider the possibility of imperfect or partial knowledge of God in other religions, completed in its fullness in the special Christian revelation. A genuine search for God without assimilating the

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[1467] M. Dhavamony, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," *Studia Missionalia* 50 (2001): 188.

[1468] P. Chenchiah, "Wherein lies the Uniqueness of Christ? An Indian Christian View," *Studia Missionalia* 20 (2001): 317.

[1469] Cf. Gaudencio B. Rosales and C. G. Arévalo, ed., *For all the People of Asia*, Vol. I, 335-347.

redemptive history of the incarnate Word, therefore, seems to be a difficult spiritual enterprise. Jesus, to this day, plays a provocative and stimulating role, motivating humanity, and especially people of other faiths in this divine-human encounter. The central mission of the Church and ecumenical/pastoral Christology is, then, to realise this authentic relationship between God and man represented in Christ, who continues to live in the people to sanctify them. It should also help humanity in listening to the Word of God in fresh ways which will enable them to understand the need and purpose of God's creation, the mystery of incarnation and salvation.[1470] It should finally witness the transforming power of God in our midst, in and through the Holy Spirit. Evangelization, to this effect, should be and needs to be inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

In our modern high tech and computerised world and in a highly advanced technological planet, we often hear critical remarks that many priests aspire to become administrators, leaders, builders, lawyers, principals and doctors. If these, who develop such aspirations but do not orient themselves and channelise their energies towards the growth of the Kingdom of God, could be misleading the faithful and the Church of God. On the other hand, if they have a proper orientation, they could effectively and efficiently preach Jesus Christ and his Kingdom values to different people with whom they daily come in contact with. Even by taking up such occupations they could convincingly give their God-experience to others and teach them to search and seek the ultimate truth, Jesus Christ. Preaching the Gospel to the world, especially through one's own personal life, is an obligation laid on every baptised and each one should repeat the words of St. Paul, "woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).

Before concluding, we wish to propose this principle and model of mutual inclusivism even in Western/Asian encounter. Mutual dialogues should also take place at regular intervals between the Holy See and Asia with a view to obtaining accurate interpretations and to attaining clarity of thought, especially with issues pertaining to faith and morals. This would definitely avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and discordant relationships. Those in the Vatican need to be convinced that the Asian/Indian Bishops are certainly not a threat to the universal Church, although occasionally considered thus. Furthermore, it should be realised and acknowledged that the Asian/Indian Bishops have reached the

[1470] Cf. Walter Kasper, "Challenged to Open Our Eyes and to Bear Witness," *The Ecumenical Review* 57, no. 3 (2005): 279.

awareness that it is time for them not only to learn from the Roman and the universal Church, but also to communicate and offer their rich and diverse experiences of being churches in Asia. Whether Rome will acknowledge and accept these attributes of the Asian churches, is a question still open for discussion.

As we are in the jubilee year of Mercy, it is appropriate to refer again to Walter Kasper. He reminds his readers to practice mercy, especially with those who do not share our Christian faith. The mercy we show to them in various ways would express human sympathy and intimacy. This simple act will also become a practical evidence and witness of our merciful God who sent his Son into this world to experience a concrete human condition, poverty and suffering. Thus, through our merciful actions, "a ray of light and warmth from God's mercy can fall in the midst of a gloomy situation."[1471] In this way, we will make the mercy of God credible in this world and keep alive the message of the hope of salvation.

We wish to conclude with the actual words of Kasper who writes, "the one truth can also be the confession of the Church in a variety of ways, sometimes leading to contradictions, mutual anathematisms, antagonisms and even complementary tensions between varied statements of confession. Even such tensions and contrasts should lead us towards unity"[1472] because in the end, God desires everyone to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4).

[1471] Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2014), 129.
[1472] Cf. Kasper, „Vom Geist und Wesen des Katholizismus," 210.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The crucial question Jesus once asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” is still relevant in our religious pluralistic context. The more time one spends discussing the identity of Jesus Christ, the more new insights emerge, and this has been extensively discussed in the previous chapters. Although we are living in the context of religious pluralism which does not favourably advocate the terminologies like “unique,” “universal,” and “only” attributed to Jesus Christ, the Church, however, teaches clearly that Jesus Christ remains unique and universal in the salvation history, that he is the universal saviour of the world, and that the real possibility of salvation for all mankind is in Christ. Thus, the question concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the salvific value of other religions remains a dogmatic issue, calling for further dialogue.

Arguing thus, it is not the intention to suggest to the adherents of other faiths, that the saving figures of their respective religions are pseudo-figures. The main thrust of this thesis is to bring to awareness that we Christians cannot place Jesus Christ on a par with other religious founders and figures. Jesus Christ and his Spirit are present and active everywhere, in all religions and cultures, though sometimes unknown, but always present. Jesus, through his death and resurrection has won salvation for all mankind, and now, being mysteriously present in the heart of every person through his Spirit, he offers to all his gift of salvation. Christians appropriate this offer of salvation by confessing their faith in Jesus Christ and his Church, the sacrament of salvation. The members of other faiths have yet to acknowledge and accept this mysterious truth.

Many might not be aware that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are mysteriously present and are working in and through them. This is also true in the case of different religious founders and leaders. The Holy Spirit reveals divine mysteries and transforms every human person, but the fruit of such transformation is only visible when the individual cooperates and responds to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is present and operative in and through all that is true and good in various cultures and religions in the world.

We believe that adherents of other faiths and especially those who have never had the possibility of knowing Jesus can be saved, but in and through Jesus Christ. God makes

them participants of salvation in a way known only to him, in so far, these follow the dictates of their conscience and engage in doing what is right and good in the sight of God. Though each religion believes and claims to be mediating salvation, they however, cannot be parallel to the salvation offered by Jesus Christ though they can be considered as participated mediations of salvation. The Church, however, acknowledges and recognises the efforts of all those religions which help their respective adherents to establish relationship with God and have faith in him, promote prayer life and inculcate gospel values. All these virtues, found in Jesus Christ in a perfect degree, could help the adherents of other religions in attaining salvation, remaining in their own respective religions, but however, these acquire value and meaning only from Christ's own mediation.

The Magisterium, however, has not taken any official position as to what extent could the non-Christian religions be called "participated mediation" as regards their role in offering salvation to their respective followers. We are less curious about what others think and say about Jesus Christ, but rather, we are concerned in the image we have of Jesus Christ, our belief in him, and all the more, we are interested in the ways and means we engage in convincingly presenting Jesus as the saviour of the world. This has been the prime interest of Cardinal Walter Kasper, which is also strongly reflected in his theological pursuit.

One may or may not be radically committed to Jesus Christ, one may use the language of uniqueness and cosmic salvation referring to Christ, or one may choose not to; what remains unimpeachable is that Jesus, the Son of God, remains always unique and is the cosmic saviour of the world. Besides organising inter-religious dialogues, it is also important that our faith in Jesus Christ is strengthened and witnessed especially in our own personal lives through prayer, worship, practice of gospel/kingdom values, and by a life inspired by the Holy Spirit, love of neighbour and our commitment towards the poor. As Cardinal Kasper has often emphasised, it is only through our personal life and our strong conviction that we can give witness to the uniqueness and the cosmic salvation of Jesus Christ and this, he believes, to be the most productive and efficacious approach to evangelisation and proclamation in our present world. May this *modus operandi* of evangelisation convincingly radiate the truth concerning the person of Jesus Christ, uniting together the scattered flock, so that one day "God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

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ABSTRACT (English)

It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran Pastor and theologian, who once rightly said, “Nothing can be known either of God or man until God has become man in Jesus Christ.” Christological studies, exploring the personality of Jesus Christ as God and man, are still significant and relevant today. This dissertation is intended to contribute to such academic investigations and research studies.

The title of this dissertation, “Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ re-visited,” although is self-explanatory, the problems raised around this theme are highly complicated. This research work, basing itself on the christological contributions of Cardinal Walter Kasper, has tried to address these complexities. Walter Kasper’s Christology, which has been contributing to the Spirit Christology in general, is taken as the point of departure. Since this thesis is addressing the core christological issue, especially the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his universal mediation, studied from the Indian perspective, two prominent theologians, namely, Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred are also brought into discussion.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, known not only for his christological contributions but also for his ecumenical ventures, has a wide knowledge of the latest trends and swings prevailing, especially in the Catholic Church. He is faithful to the Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, and also to the magisterial teachings. On the contrary, theologizing in the Indian scenario is done in the context of poverty and religious pluralism, where inculturation and contextualization play a predominant role. The aim of this dissertation is not to compare and contrast the Western and Asian trends in doing theology, though at times, this factor has been unavoidably alluded to.

Any serious project in doing Christology should be essentially faithful to the Scripture, to the Traditions handed down by the Church and to the conciliar teachings. In the process of inculturation or contextualization, even the slightest attempt to overlook, ignore or misinterpret any of these, could lead to theological errors. This dissertation has tried to analyze the theologizing methods in the Indian scenario and has identified some misapprehensions.

The place of Jesus Christ in a multi-religious country like India and moreover, Christianity's exclusive claims concerning the uniqueness and universal mediation of Jesus Christ, has been a crucial issue and a subject of great concern. A universal and a definitive answer to this thorny issue, seems to be almost beyond reach. This work tries to explain how Catholic scholars in India, while doing theology, were repeating the same old concepts in various combinations. But gradually they became aware that these concepts need a new language, a language that fits the culture of the soil. However, the context in which theological reflection is carried out has always remained complex and challenging.

This dissertation, after elaborately expounding the christological reflections of Walter Kasper, has attempted to figure out a few elements of his theological contributions, which appear to suit the Indian multi-religious and multi-cultural context. Responding to the call of *Ecclesia in Asia*, which entreats the Church in Asia to develop its own pedagogy in proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Universal Saviour (EA 20), this thesis has proposed some viable working principles. Here are a few of them:

The proclamation of the universal salvation in Jesus Christ remains intact, but different ways and means could be experimented in convincingly and effectively reaching out to non-Christian brethren with this message. The invisible working of the Holy Spirit outside the boundaries of the Church has to be duly respected and hence, there is a need to promote Spirit Christology. The need of dialogue, (both *ad intra* and *ad extra*), is of prime importance but however, it has to take the form of non-confrontational communication, in order to be healthy and fruitful. Finally, the mission of the Church in India is clear – making Jesus Christ known and loved, and no attempts and efforts should be spared, in attaining this end.

This dissertation finally wants to certify the following: Scripture, Apostolic Tradition, Dogmas and the magisterial teachings of the Church are the foundations on which Christianity stands even today. However, in a country like India, which is a cradle of world religions, new ways of expressing our faith are absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, this work discourages any attempt to dilute the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church for the sake of adaptation, since it considers such an endeavour, inappropriate and inadmissible. Unless one is truly convinced of the divine origin of our faith, any inter-religious dialogue may end up in compromises and be counter-productive.

ABSTRACT (German)

Es war Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ein deutscher lutherischer Pastor und Theologe, der einmal sagte: „Weder von Gott noch über den Menschen konnte man etwas wissen, bis Gott Mensch wurde in Jesus Christus.“ Christologische Forschung, das Nachdenken über die Personalität Jesu Christi als Gott und Mensch, ist auch heute noch von Bedeutung. Diese Dissertation möchte zum diesbezüglichen akademischen Diskurs einen Beitrag leisten.

Der sich scheinbar selbsterklärende Titel der Arbeit, „Uniqueness an Universitality of Jesus Christ re-visited“, führt dennoch zu verschiedenen komplexen Fragestellungen. Diese Arbeit versucht einige dieser Problemfelder zu bearbeiten, indem sie insbesondere die christologischen Beiträge Kardinal Walter Kaspers in den Blick nimmt. Kaspers Christologie, die im Wesentlichen als Beitrag zur Geist-Christologie verstanden werden kann, stellt also gewissermaßen den Ausgangspunkt der Überlegungen dar. Da die Arbeit christologische Kernfragen – insbesondere auf die Einzigartigkeit Christi und dessen universelle Mittlerschaft – aus Perspektive indischer Theologie behandelt, sollen dementsprechend auch zwei prominente Theologen des indischen Subkontinents, namentlich Michael Amaladoss und Felix Wilfred, in die Diskussion eingeführt werden.

Kardinal Kasper, der neben seinen Beiträgen zur Christologie nicht minder bedeutende zur Ökumene geleistet hat, besitzt eine umfassende Kenntnis auch der jüngsten Umbrüche und Trends im Fach, v.a. natürlich in Hinblick auf den Diskurs innerhalb der katholischen Theologie. Sein Denken gründet in der Heiligen Schrift, der Tradition und dem Lehramt. Gleichwohl bedeutet Theologie im kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Szenario Indiens zu treiben, dies im Kontext von Armut und religiösem Pluralismus zu tun, so dass Inkulturation und Kontextualisierung eine wesentliche Rolle spielen müssen. Auch wenn es zuweilen nicht zu vermeiden sein wird, besteht das Ziel dieser Dissertation jedoch nicht darin, einen Vergleich zwischen westlicher und asiatischer Christologie anzustellen, oder diese gar zu kontrastieren.

Jeder ernst zu nehmende Versuch Christologie zu treiben, muss in einem gläubigen Hören auf die Schrift, die kirchliche Überlieferung, sowie die lehramtlichen Entscheidungen fundiert sein. Gerade im Prozess von Inkulturation und Kontextualisierung können schon geringe Unachtsamkeiten gegenüber diesen Fundamenten in theologische Sackgassen

münden. In dieser Dissertation wird versucht, die theologischen Methoden, wie sie unter den spezifischen indischen Gegebenheiten angewandt werden, zu analysieren und es werden auch einige zentrale Missverständnisse benannt.

Die Bedeutung Jesu Christi in einem multireligiösen Land wie Indien und – mehr noch – die exklusiven Ansprüche des Christentums in Bezug auf Einzigartigkeit und universelle Erlösung stellen nach wie vor gewichtige Probleme und Themen von großem Interesse dar. Eine umfassende und definitive Antwort auf diese scheint außer Reichweite. Diese Arbeit versucht jene Entwicklung zu erklären, in welcher indische Theologen vom bloß repetitiven Wiedergeben der klassischen Lehrsätze graduell zur Einsicht der Notwendigkeit einer neuen Sprache gelangten – einer Sprache, die der Kultur Indiens angemessen ist. Es erübrigt sich beinahe festzuhalten, dass es sich hierbei um einen komplexen und theologisch herausfordernden Prozess handelt.

Im Anschluss an die eingehende Betrachtung der christologischen Reflexionen Walter Kaspers wird versucht, jene Aspekte von dessen Theologie herauszuarbeiten, die besonders geeignet erscheinen, auch im multireligiösen und -kulturellen Kontext Indiens anwendbar zu sein. Als Reaktion auf das Apostolische Schreiben Ecclesia in Asia, in welchem die Kirche Asiens aufgefordert wird, ihre eigene Pädagogik in Hinblick auf die Verkündigung Jesu Christi als den universellen Erlöser zu entwickeln, versucht diese Arbeit ein paar grundlegende Arbeitsprinzipien hierfür vorzustellen. Einige davon seien genannt:

Die Botschaft von der universellen Erlösung durch Jesus Christus bleibt intakt, aber es können neue Mittel angewandt und Wege gegangen werden, um mit dieser Botschaft auf überzeugende und attraktive Weise auch die Geschwister aus den nicht-christlichen Religionen zu erreichen. Das unsichtbare Wirken des Heiligen Geistes jenseits der Grenzen der Kirche muss angemessen berücksichtigt werden, weshalb Bedarf nach einer Förderung der Geist-Christologie besteht. Der Dialog zu diesem Thema – ad intra und extra – ist von höchster Wichtigkeit und muss sich, um fruchtbar sein zu können, in Form einer nicht-konfrontativen Kommunikation vollziehen. Dabei kann am Ziel der Berufung der Kirche Asiens kein Zweifel bestehen: Es geht darum, Jesus Christus bekannt zu machen und die Liebe zu ihm zu fördern. Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, dürfen keine Mühen gescheut werden.

Schließlich will sich diese Dissertation folgender Grundsätze versichern: Heilige Schrift, Tradition, Dogmen und Lehramt der Kirche stellen auch heute noch zusammen das christliche Fundament dar. Zugleich sind im Falle eines Landes wie Indien, das als Wiege einiger Weltreligionen bezeichnet werden darf, Neuformulierungen unseres Glaubens unbedingt notwendig. Nichtsdestoweniger wird in dieser Arbeit jeder Versuch – mag er auch dem verständlichen Wunsch nach Anpassung entspringen –, die fundamentalen Lehren der Katholischen Kirche zu relativieren, als unangemessen und unzulässig zurückgewiesen. Denn fehlt die Überzeugung vom göttlichen Ursprung unseres Glaubens, wird jeder interreligiöse Dialog nur zu kontraproduktiven Kompromissen führen.