

From Banerjee to Bediako: Theology of Religions as a Resource for Local Theology

by Donald Grigorenko

The impetus for this study came while teaching a course in global theology during which we read African theologian Kwame Bediako's collection of essays, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*.¹ In some of his essays, I encountered language touching on the relationship of Christianity and African primal religions reminiscent of the words I had seen in the writings of an earlier Indian counterpart: Indian theologian Krishna Mohan Banerjee (alternative spelling, Banerjea) of the nineteenth century, writing on the relationship of Christianity and Hinduism. Consequently, I decided to revisit the issue of the relationship of Christianity to other religious worlds by comparing Bediako with Banerjee. I plan to briefly describe the contribution of Krishna Mohan Banerjee and then go on to describe what I have found in Bediako's essays. Finally, I will conclude with a set of propositions and questions drawn from a consideration of these two which suggest a role for theology of religions in theological construction.

Krishna Mohan Banerjee

Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813–1885) was an important early proponent of what became known as the “fulfillment theory.”² He was born a Brahmin in Bengal India and educated at Hindu College. He converted to Christianity at the age of eighteen under the influence of Alexander Duff, studied theology at Bishop's College in Calcutta, and then became the first Indian priest in the Anglican Church. He was a man of energy and intellect. He labored as a theologian and apologist for the faith as well as a religious, social and political reformer.

T. V. Phillip remarks that during the nineteenth century India

was the occasion and context for the publication of a large number of Christian apologetic writings, both by western renaissance and by Indian Christians. The apologies thus produced by the Indian Christians marked the beginning of indigenous theological thinking among Protestants in India. Krishna Mohan was the most outstanding of the apologists of this period.³

Protestant missionary approaches to Hinduism at the time were polemical. Duff, who influenced Banerjee toward Christianity, reflected the common

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attitude toward Hinduism describing it as “a waste and moral wilderness, where all life dies and death lives.”⁴

The perceived missionary task was to wipe the religious slate clean of idolatry and superstition and rebuild with fresh “Christian” material. Contrary to this approach, Banerjee, in his later writings, argued for continuity between ancient Vedic Hinduism and Christianity. Christian material was needed, but the slate need not be wiped clean.

In his book *The Relation between Christianity and Hinduism* (first published in 1913), Banerjee sought to establish two propositions. The first is that,

the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine in relation to the salvation of the world find a remarkable counterpart in the Vedic principle of primitive Hinduism in relation to the destruction of sin, and the redemption of the sinner by the efficacy of Sacrifice, itself a figure of *Prajapati*, the Lord and Saviour of the Creation, who had given himself up as an offering for that purpose. (Emphasis mine)

The second proposition is

that the meaning *Prajapati*, an appellative variously described as a *Purusha* begotten in the beginning, as *Viswakarma* the creator of all, singularly coincides with the meaning of the name and offices of the historical reality Jesus Christ, and that no other person than Jesus of Nazareth has ever appeared in the world claiming the character and position of the self-sacrificing *Prajapati*, at the same time both mortal and immortal.⁵

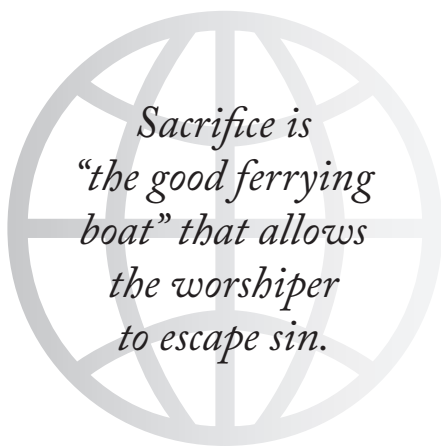
After defining Hinduism in its original form as a religion of the Vedas,⁶ he sought to establish his first proposition. He began by arguing for a theistic creator from causality. He wrote, “The visible universe leads to the conviction of an invisible cause of all things.”⁷ Thus, in Thomistic fashion, he concluded, “There must be a Creator who made all these things and adapted them to their specific ends.”⁸ Coming to the Vedic texts, Banerjee did not simply declare

that ancient Hinduism presented a biblical theism but rather he found that those ancient texts declare

the existence of one unborn or eternal Being as different from and superior to *Devas* and *Asuras*, and far above heaven and earth.⁹

His theological anthropology then followed with the observation that human nature is grounded in the dependence of humanity upon the Creator which accounts for religion.¹⁰ Thus humanity is created or adapted to the specific end: God.

Banerjee’s concern was principally on connections between a biblical presentation of Jesus and the Vedic presentations of the catastrophe of human sin and the



remedy of a sacrifice offered by a unique savior. He began the discussion of his Christology at the point of sacrifice.

Sacrifice (*yajna*) in primitive Vedic tradition is “the first and primary” rite which is attributed to “Creation’s Lord.”¹¹ Sacrificial rites were instituted by the Creator and part of the original creation. It is sacrifice that allows the penitent to break away from the debilitating effects of sin. The Rig Veda presents the worship of and sacrifice to *Varuna* the Supreme Being as a “ship that bears us safely, whereby we may pass over all misfortune.”¹² Sacrifice is the ship or, in other translations “the good ferrying boat,” that allows the worshiper to escape sin and be transported to a heavenly

world of salvation.¹³ So Banerjee argues a properly done sacrifice brings the annulment of sin for humanity and the *Devas*, who are regarded as originally mortal humans but who later populated the Hindu pantheon of deities.

The belief in the efficacy of sacrifice for sin is nothing unique in the world of religions. What was of particular interest to Banerjee was the importance given to the self-sacrifice of *Prajapati*, the One Lord of Creation, in the form of *Purusha*, the cosmic man or being from which humanity and all materiality come. It is this sacrifice of the One that was reenacted in animal sacrifices (of the horse in particular) for the sins of the *Devas* and humanity in primitive Vedic descriptions.¹⁴ Thus, *Purusha*, regarded as a Divine-human person, died as a ransom for sin. Banerjee quotes the Veda saying, “Because all were devoted to destruction, therefore one died for all.”¹⁵

Banerjee then moves to establish his second principle which identifies the *Prajapati*, the self-sacrificing *Purusha* with Jesus of the Bible. He says,

all that has just been shown appertaining the self-sacrifice of *Prajapati* curiously resembles the Biblical description of Christ as God and man, our very Emmanuel, mortal and immortal, who “hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savior,” of whom all previous sacrifices were but figures and reflections.¹⁶

Jesus is the true *Prajapati*. Jesus alone fulfills the primitive Vedic ideal of a divine-human sacrifice for sin; one who is both priest and victim. Consequently, no one can be a true Hindu without being a true Christian.

Of interest to us is how Banerjee described the continuity between primitive Vedic religion and Christianity. He said, these teachings about the self-sacrificing *Prajapati* which

appeared in our Vedas amid much rubbish, and things worse than rubbish, may be viewed as fragments of diamonds sparkling amid dust and

mud, testifying to some invisible fabric of which they were component parts, and bearing witness like planets over a dark horizon to the absent sun of which their refulgence was but a feeble reflection.¹⁷

For Banerjee, “The Vedas foreshew the Epiphany of Christ,”¹⁸ imperfectly, and mixed with much confusion and ambiguity, but nevertheless Christ is present. Thus, the Vedas contain primitive revelation “which was scarcely less than that of Jewish seers themselves.”¹⁹ So what is the relation between primitive Vedic teaching and Christianity? Intimate, declares Banerjee, “you can scarcely hold the one without being led to the other.”²⁰ Those who accept Christianity “are only accepting Vedic doctrine in its legitimately developed form.”²¹

Kwame Bediako

Kwame Bediako (1945–2008) was born in Ghana, studied French at the University of Ghana and the University of Bordeaux where he earned a PhD studying French Literature and African literature in French. While at Bordeaux he converted to Christianity. He then studied theology at London Bible College and at Aberdeen under Andrew Walls. He was instrumental in initiating the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology in 1987 and the African Theological Initiative in 1992. His theological and missional interest was expressed with commitment to both the biblical gospel and the cultures of Africa.²² As with Banerjee, Bediako demonstrated impressive scholarship earning doctorates in both French and English.

Unlike Banerjee who was offering an apologetic to skeptical and even hostile Hindus to accept the biblical Jesus as the true fulfillment of the Prajapati presented in the Vedas, Bediako was set in the context of an extensively Christianized sub-Saharan Africa. His concern was the *identity* of the African church as African, and in doing

How could African religious consciousness become integrated into a unified vision of what it meant to be African and Christian?

so, he affirmed identity as a theological category and proposed that part of the theological task is to wrestle with

how and how far, the “old” and the “new” in African religious consciousness could become integrated into a unified vision of what it meant to be African *and* Christian.²³

Bediako navigated between both radical continuity and radical discontinuity in answering the question of how and how far the old and the new in African religious consciousness can be integrated into the African Christian experience. His own course sought to account for both the past growth of Christianity in Africa as well as to encourage a way forward. The past explosion of the church in Africa can partially be accounted for by the fact that Christianity “is not intrinsically foreign to Africa.”²⁴ This, he stated, is because of the continuity between African primal religions and the biblical worldview and gospel, which provided the key “preparation for the Gospel.”²⁵

The process that allowed the gospel to find fertile ground in Africa began with the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages. Citing Andrew Walls, Bediako agreed that it is the nature of the Christian faith itself which determines that it is culturally translatable. He then went on to draw out the implications of this citing Lamin Sanneh:

The import of Scripture translation and its priority in missionary work is an indication that “God was not disdainful of Africans as to be incommunicable in their languages” (Sanneh 1983:166). This, Sanneh goes on, not only “imbued African cultures with eternal significance and endowed African languages with a transcendent range,” it also “presumed that the God of the Bible had preceded the missionary into the receptor-culture.”

As, through the very process of Scripture translation, “the central categories of Christian theology—God, Jesus Christ, creation, history—are transposed into their local equivalents, suggesting that Christianity had been adequately anticipated.”²⁶

Going further, he commented:

The centrality of Scripture translation points to the significance of African pre-Christian religious cultures, not only as a “valid carriage for the divine revelation,” but also as providing the idiom for Christian apprehension... The God whose name had been hallowed in the indigenous languages in the pre-Christian past was found to be the God of the Bible.²⁷

What is critical in understanding Sanneh and Bediako at this point is that these statements are more than statements about linguistic convenience in translating the Bible; rather it was the *process* of Bible translation that touched on something deeper, something anticipated, and something that prepared the way for the reception of the gospel. Indeed, God had preceded the missionary and had already created “categories of Christian theology.”

Throughout the history of missionary activity in Africa, the “prepared way” was often unrecognized or cast aside.²⁸ But despite this lack of attention to African traditional religions by Western missionaries, African theologians themselves have more recently found theological resources in African traditional religions. Bediako states:

For many years African theologians have refused to accept the negative view of African religion held by western missionaries and have shown consistently the continuity of God from the pre-Christian African past into the Christian present (Idowu, 1962; Mbiti, 1970; Setiloane, 1976). They have, therefore, like the Apostle Paul,

handed to us the assurance that with our Christian conversion, we are not introduced to a new God unrelated to the traditions of our past, but *to One who brings to fulfillment all the highest religious and cultural aspiration of our heritage.*²⁹ (Emphasis mine)

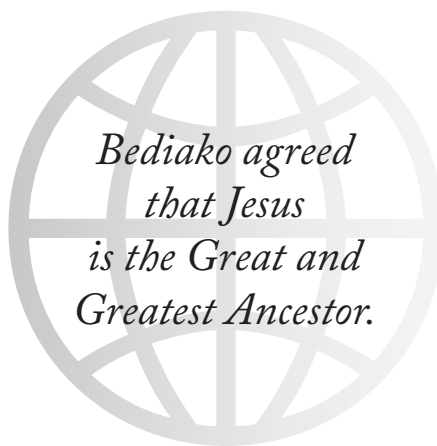
Bediako then explored examples in which Jesus might bring fulfillment to these religious and cultural aspirations. One of the most instructive was his description of Jesus as “ancestor” in the Akan worldview. He began by mapping the Akan spiritual universe and placed first on this map God, the Supreme Spirit Being (*Onyame*) who is the “Creator and Sustainer of the universe”³⁰ Below the Supreme Spirit Being are small “g” gods (*abosom*) and the ancestors (*Nsamanfo*). The gods may be capricious and bring harm, but the Supreme God and the ancestors are respected, worshiped, and appealed to for benefits. Ancestors are clan ancestors but not all the dead of a clan are admitted to the class of ancestors. It is only those who are “considered worthy of honour, for having ‘lived among us’ and for having brought benefits to us.”³¹ Ancestors then function to bring “well-being (or otherwise) to individuals and communities.”³²

Bediako agreed with John Pobee that Jesus is “the Great and Greatest Ancestor.”³³ But how can Jesus, who is not of an Akan clan, be regarded as such? Bediako’s answer was to begin with Jesus’ universality as savior of all people and all nations of which the Akan are one. His anthropology then emphasized the solidarity of all humanity created in God’s image. The Akan notion of clan was then extended to all humanity and Jesus presented as “one of us” through the incarnation. Thus the Akan story becomes a story within the larger story of humanity in relation to God.

Sin is, stated Bediako, in its essence, an antisocial act. This is in contrast to Western conceptions of sin that rest primarily on legal metaphors which emphasize sin as breaking a rule or

law by an individual. For the Akan, another person or the community has been damaged or shamed. Within the Akan spiritual universe, God is an injured party and has consequently withdrawn and is remote.

Jesus is the Great and Greatest Ancestor³⁴ for the Akan as one who “lived among us” through the incarnation and as one who has lived the most honorable and exemplary life. Further, his identity as God, his exultation through the resurrection, make him victor over evil and able to provide benefits to his followers in the form of protection from forces of evil.³⁵ Finally, drawing on Akan ideas of sacrifice, Jesus becomes the sacrifice that heals the social divide between a



remote offended God and the Akan. The soteriological center for the Akan is the restoration of a disrupted relationship or reconciliation, rather than the reformed center of justification, according to which Christ assumes the legal penalty for human sin. With such a process, the task is not to “accommodate the Gospel in our culture; the Gospel becomes our story.”³⁶

Bediako argued that it is just this kind of continuity between features of the Akan spiritual universe, and the biblical worldview and gospel that account for the acceptance of Christianity among the Akan. Reflecting on this past brought Bediako to propose that our theological method be adjusted

to intentionally engage pre-Christian religious traditions in the task of theological construction. To do so demands a theological interpretation of these traditions such that “Christ comes into places, thoughts, relationships and world-views in which He has never lived before” (quoting Walls).³⁷ Addressing Christology, the process also demands reflecting about Christ while reading and hearing the scriptures as well as reflecting on the experience of Christ by the believing community.³⁸ This reflection ensures that the theological result is “recognizable and owned by the world Christian community.”³⁹

This process, Bediako argued, is not new. The transition of the church in the early centuries from a Jewish phenomenon to a Gentile phenomenon is parallel to what is occurring in the African church.⁴⁰ As the church became increasingly Graeco-Roman and less Jewish, issues of identity arose. The church was forced to answer the question, what does it mean to be Graeco-Roman and Christian? The question then led to “bold initiatives in actual theological production;”⁴¹ a “synthesis between Christian religious commitment and cultural continuity.”⁴² The context was one marked by religious and ideational pluralism and so the church was forced to theologially interpret these traditions and offer solutions appropriate to these conditions. The transition was not smooth and the players in the transition proposed differing syntheses.

Propositions

1. Theology is a synthetic task combining biblical, historical, and cultural/religious resources, and therefore the cultural/religious context of the people of God has theological significance.

Cultural and religious traditions have not been allowed a place at the table of theological discussions in the West largely because the West, while under the domination of Christendom, has

not felt the pressure of a pluralistic context. The theological formulation of the early church, nineteenth century India, and twentieth Africa felt that pressure and have responded with creative theological productivity. The challenge to the West is to recognize that its own theological formulations are indeed contextual and to resist the temptation to view other indigenous theologies with suspicion.⁴³ Banerjee and Bediako are both engaged in this synthetic task: the former with Vedic texts and the later with African traditional religions.

2. A theological interpretation of cultural/religious contexts demands a role for the discipline of theology of religions along with biblical studies, historical theology, dogmatics, and ministry studies.

Theology of Religions is the new kid on the block⁴⁴ and as such it is negotiating its relationship with senior members in the neighborhood. The West is further behind in these negotiations than other parts of the world. Bediako notes that, “No self-respecting theological institution in Africa can avoid the study of African traditional religions.”⁴⁵ In the West, we do not yet recognize the demand for the discipline.

3. Creative theological expression grows out of and contributes to the mission of God’s people in the world.

Both thinkers are missional in purpose. Banerjee was an apologist theologically appealing to Hindus of his time with a Christian theological interpretation of the Vedas. Bediako sought both to account for and encourage the continued movement of the gospel in Africa. He articulates a way forward that learns from the past. Theologies generated in mission are theologies of engagement. Bediako, reflecting Martin Kahler’s statement that mission is the mother of theology, states:

Having been forced to do theology in the interface of their Christian faith and the perennial spiritualities of their African primal heritage, and

What did Bediako mean when he said that the “God of the Bible had preceded the missionary into the receptor-culture?”

having to internalize that dialogue with themselves, African theologians have restored the character of theology as Christian intellectual activity *on the frontier with the non-Christian world* as essentially *communicative, evangelistic* and *missionary*. (Quoting Verkuyl, emphasis mine)⁴⁶

Questions

1. What are the appropriate vocabulary and theological concepts for expressing the relationship between the biblical and the cultural and religious?

Both authors offer a variety of terms and concepts that beg clarification with careful theological reflection; terms such as *counterpart, coincide, fulfill, foreshow, figure, reflection, primitive revelation*. What did Bediako mean when he said that the “God of the Bible had preceded the missionary into the receptor-culture,” or that “Christianity had been adequately anticipated,” or that God “brings to fulfillment all the highest religious and cultural aspirations of our heritage?”⁴⁷ Do these terms signal no more than a revival of the old fulfillment theory championed by J. N. Farquhar⁴⁸ and opposed by Henrick Kraemer? And what of general, natural, and special revelation? Theological literature coming from African authors has awakened these questions and debates that were the talk of the first half of the twentieth century. We should be once again rolling up our sleeves and going to work on these notions and in so doing, adding resources to our tool box labeled “theology of religions.”⁴⁹

2. What “controls” will keep the task from flying off the rails resulting in theological formulation that ceases to be distinctly Christian?

There is the danger of syncretism with a process that admits to the discussion

cultural and non-Christian religious participants. Once continuity between the cultural/religious context and the Christian thought is allowed, does one step on to that slippery slope that only tilts in one direction: to the compromise of the faith once delivered to the saints? I would not label either Banerjee or Bediako a soteriological pluralist or even an inclusivist. Both came to the task with a high view of the authority of scripture which must remain one of the guard rails for evangelicals.

But another guard rail is suggested by Bediako. He admits that non-Western Christianity

poses all sorts of questions and produces a whole range of problems for which our theological knowledge, gained through study in the West, has not prepared us.⁵⁰

So he asks,

does this mean that in researching non-Western Christianity, we are cast adrift on an entirely uncharted sea, with no guiding instruments of any sort?⁵¹

His answer is Christian history. As mentioned above, the second and the third centuries present a methodological analogue in which Christ “was explored in terms of Hellenistic language and thought.”⁵² And in so doing, according to Andrew Walls, the Gentiles were able to grasp the “full stature of Christ.”

The task is a demanding one. Doing “in-house” theology poses less risk. Stepping into the Indian or Ghanaian marketplace and doing theology there demands greater theological precision and care—much like the handling of an unstable element in the chemistry lab.⁵³ Theology of religions may be that unstable element, but it is an essential one in our theological formulation. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2004.
- ² T. V. Phillip, "Krishna Mohan Banerjea and the Arian Witness to Christ: Jesus Christ the True Prajapati," *Indian Journal of Theology* 29, no. 2 (1980): 74.
- ³ Phillip, "Krishna Mohan Banerjea," 76.
- ⁴ Alexander Duff quoted in Phillip, "Krishna Mohan Banerjea," 76.
- ⁵ Krishna Mohan Banerjea, *The Relation Between Christianity and Hinduism*, First published in 1888 by Oxford Mission Press (Calcutta), in *From Exclusivism to Inclusivism: The Theological Writings of Krishna Mohan Banerjea*, edited by K. P. Aleaz, 181–182. New Delhi: Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1998.
- ⁶ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 181–182.
- ⁷ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 184.
- ⁸ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 184.
- ⁹ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 185–189.
- ¹⁰ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 184.
- ¹¹ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 186–187.
- ¹² Rig Veda 8.42.3 in Krishna Mohan Banerjea, *The Relation Between Christianity and Hinduism*, 188.
- ¹³ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 188.
- ¹⁴ Rig Veda 10.90.1–16 in Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 188.
- ¹⁵ I can find no reference to the specific Veda for this quote. Some of Banerjee's quotes of the Vedas appear to be his own translation.
- ¹⁶ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 193.
- ¹⁷ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 196.
- ¹⁸ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 196.
- ¹⁹ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 198.
- ²⁰ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 200.
- ²¹ Banerjea, *Christianity and Hinduism*, 200.
- ²² Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, xiv.
- ²³ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 53.
- ²⁴ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 55.
- ²⁵ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 21.

- ²⁶ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 16.
- ²⁷ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 16.
- ²⁸ Bediako appears to misrepresent the section on Animism in the 1910 Edinburgh report on "The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions" when he states that "the general feeling was that there was 'practically no religious content in Animism', nor was there in it 'any preparation for Christianity' (*Missionary Message*, 1910:24) in Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 78. This position is stated to be a minority opinion and the majority was one in which "points of contact" are allowed. These include "belief in the existence of a Higher Power or Supreme Being," the afterlife, practice of sacrifice, consciousness of sin, etc. Certainly, "points of contact" fall short of what Bediako is suggesting as the "preparation" for Christianity found in African primal religions. Yet on the level of missionary practice, what Bediako states is most certainly true.
- ²⁹ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 21.
- ³⁰ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 22.
- ³¹ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 30.
- ³² Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 23.
- ³³ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 24.
- ³⁴ One of the difficulties of communicating Bediako's proposal that Jesus as ancestor as a valid Christological claim is the different meanings attached to the Akan term and that term translated into English. One is an appropriate designator for Jesus and the other (the translated term) is not. The semantic ranges overlap but are not identical and further, there is a differing connotation attached to each term. Consequently, "Hardly anyone will pray in English to 'Ancestor Jesus' or 'Chief Jesus,' but many will pray in Akan to 'Nana Yesu.'" Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 78. Thus acceptance of Jesus as ancestor by a native English speaker is more a problem of identifying an acceptable English term.
- ³⁵ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 27.
- ³⁶ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 25.
- ³⁷ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 117.
- ³⁸ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 81.
- ³⁹ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 81.
- ⁴⁰ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 63.
- ⁴¹ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 63.
- ⁴² Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 67.
- ⁴³ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 67.
- ⁴⁴ Although theology of religion(s) is evident through the 19th century, it has not been a welcome participant in theological formulation. Rather, it is biblical studies, and dogmatics, often in dialogue with

Western philosophy, that have been the exclusive participants.

- ⁴⁵ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 69.
- ⁴⁶ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978): 277 as in Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 59.
- ⁴⁷ Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, translated into English as "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965" and last modified June 4, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

From *Nostra Aetate*, Point #1: "Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?"

From *Nostra Aetate*, Point #2: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ 'the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself."

⁴⁸ J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oriental Books, 1913, 1971).

⁴⁹ One more recent, but not contemporary thinker who has done this is Lesslie Newbigin. Joe M. Thomas has helpfully put Newbigin and Kraemer side by side in his "Continuity, Discontinuity, and the Finality of Christ: a Theological Essay on the Thought of Lesslie Newbigin and Henrick Kraemer" in *Dharma Deepika* January 2009, 25–34.

- ⁵⁰ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 79.
- ⁵¹ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 79.
- ⁵² Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 79.
- ⁵³ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 69.

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