

# Presentation Responses

## Answering the Call to Inreligionisation: A Response to Dr. Kang-San Tan

by H. L. Richard

I must first express great appreciation to Dr. Tan for his stimulating paper. It seems to me that this paper builds significantly on earlier insights he has shared with the missiological community.

Particularly, Dr. Tan wrestled with the personal implications of his Buddhist heritage, and in *Mission Studies* in 2014 wrote that:

after years of studying and teaching Buddhism, and further reflection on my own conversion to Christ, I have come to realize that one cannot completely suppress past identities and belief systems. Instead, one stage of wholesome growth in Christian discipleship requires a return, retrieval, and reintegration of those appropriate elements from one's socio-religious past. I suggest that this fresh reintegration provides both deep-level transformation and a more holistic development of what usually has been a very compartmentalized faith. (2014, 140)

The careful qualifications in this statement are appreciated, as is the focus on engaging, learning from, and integrating "appropriate elements" from non-Christian traditions into life in Christ.

With his paper, Dr. Tan has moved far from the personal realm of wholesome growth in Christ to the broader realms of paradigms for interreligious engagement, particularly in reintroducing the term "inreligionisation."

Dr. Tan rightly highlights both the importance and the complexity of interreligious encounter. In response to his presentation, I will first quibble with a few points before moving to appreciation. My first problem is one that is perhaps beyond solution for any of us who write or speak in this field. But perhaps constant reminders to each other about the problem will help move us forward. That is, I find Dr. Tan's use of "religion" inconsistent and inadequate. He goes to Ninian Smart for a core definition, highlighting the transcendent, ritual practice, and a community of faith.

The problem with this paradigm is that it simply does not fit with the popular "world religions" paradigm which is also assumed in Dr. Tan's paper. Within each of the world religions, there are multiple definitions of the transcendent, multiple ceremonial practices, and multiple faith communities. Sometimes there is more similarity *across* traditions than there is *within*.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the complexity and confusion around the term "religion," there will have to be some measure of agreed meaning or meanings for inreligionisation to be a useful construct.<sup>2</sup>

These points of objection could be subsumed under Dr. Tan's rightful assertions about the complexity of his topic. More important are his strong calls for reconsideration and redefinition. This body, and many of us as individuals, need to wrestle with inreligionisation. The term sounds novel, and mostly is so despite its use ("enreligionisation") by Aloysius Pieris (1988, 52) with a nod of approval from David Bosch (1991, 477). Dr. Tan suggests that this term brings a focus and clarity that is lacking with the standard terms of inculturation and contextualization. Going into and working within a cultural tradition is contextualization or inculturation. Going into and working within a religious tradition might be considered largely the same thing yet carries some alternative and highly challenging connotations. Inreligionisation brings a focus that is lacking, perhaps glossed over, in the current terminologies.

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Adequate discussion of this term (important) and concept (essential) cannot even begin in this type of response. But I would like to suggest that this term and concept may not be as novel as at first appears. I suggest that inreligionisation is a necessary corollary to Johan Herman Bavinck's central concept of *possessio*, that disciples of Jesus are to take into possession under Christ and for the glory of Christ all of the heritages of the world's cultural traditions (1960, 178–179). The Buddhist heritage belongs to Buddhists who become captive to the glory of Christ, and under Christ "all things are theirs" (1 Cor 3:21–23) and they are called to possess for Christ that rich heritage.<sup>3</sup> This is inreligionisation as foreshadowed by Bavinck (granting that Bavinck himself did not apply his *possessio* approach to Buddhist or Hindu or Muslim realities).

Bavinck's missiological successor in this line of thought, who initiated me into this heritage, Harvie Conn, suggested in his paper on "The Muslim Convert and His Culture," that "turning to Christ is not always seen as also a turning to culture, where the believer rediscovers his human origins and identity" (1978, 105). Conn's statement would perhaps be more accurate had he said "turning to Christ is not *ever* seen as a turning to culture," at

least I am not familiar with anyone using that terminology. Such a turning to culture certainly includes a turning to the religious heritage of any culture, as anyone familiar with Conn (and even the paper quoted) understands his opposition to bifurcating religion as merely an aspect of a culture. Thus, emboldened by Dr. Tan, we can say that turning to Christ is also a turning to the religious traditions that have shaped a person and society within any given culture.<sup>4</sup>

Bavinck, Conn, Kang-San Tan, and I must not be misunderstood as suggesting a blatant, Christ-decentering syncretism. But inreligionisation is a call to a more positive approach to culture and religion while recognizing, in the words of Bavinck, that "the question of *possessio* leads to the greatest problems throughout the entire world" (1960, 179).

May we dream that in this presentation, Kang-San Tan has set a new direction for current missiology, that there will be a response to his call that impacts the future of evangelical missiology, and the Evangelical Missiological Society? Classrooms, think tanks, podcasts, seminars, and conferences need to wrestle with this theme and move towards transformed thinking and practice at the frontiers of interreligious encounter. Anything less leaves us open to the rebuke of making daisy chains while ignoring the central missiological issue of our time.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For just one example, under the transcendent or philosophical/theological category of Smart's paradigm, note Francis Clooney's account of alliances across boundaries in Hindu-Christian discussions:

On some points of theological difference, one's allies may be theologians in one's own tradition. On some, one may find closer allies among theologians who belong to other traditions. Christian theologians who agree with the Nyāya logicians on the cogency of the cosmological argument thereby also disagree with many Christian theologians, with Mimāṃsā and Buddhist theologians who do not believe there is a God, and with Vedānta theologians who are skeptical about whether inductions of God's existence can ever be cogent. Similarly, differing views about the meanings of embodiment and divine embodiment will lead some Christian theologians to side with the Śaivas, who reject more material notions of divine body, and others to ally with the Vaiṣṇavas, who favor a more literal understanding of embodiment. (2001, 174)

<sup>2</sup> See my *IJFM* review of Brent Nongbri's outstanding study *Before Religion* (33:3, Fall 2016): 138–9; [https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/33\\_3\\_PDFs/IJFM\\_33\\_3-BookReviews.pdf](https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/33_3_PDFs/IJFM_33_3-BookReviews.pdf), for a summary of helpful modern shifts in thinking about religion.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly in light of a focus on prioritizing those who come to faith from other faith traditions, it is advisable to adjust Bavinck and posit a *mutual possessio*, as arguably the Hindu or Buddhist who turns to Christ is taking possession of Christ and his riches while standing within their historic faith tradition. This mitigates the triumphal and colonial overtones potentially present in *possessio*. I owe this perspective to R. C. Das of Banaras (1887–1976), whose approach I will be publishing soon.

<sup>4</sup> Conn, in unpublished class lecture notes on "Missionary Encounter with World Religions," wrote:

Christ takes the life of a religious people in His hands. And, using their agenda as the fallen images of God, he turns their religious aspirations in an entirely different direction. He renews and re-establishes the distorted and deteriorated. He corrects and amplifies even the religious agenda. He fills each religious hope, each religious word, each religious practice with a new meaning and gives it a new direction. This is not "adaptation" or "accommodation" or "fulfillment." As Bavinck says, "it is in essence the legitimate taking possession of something by him to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth" (1960: 179). Calvin's ineradicable seed of religion sprouts at last in Christ. (Conn n.d., 114)

### References

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## Rethinking Mission in an Asian Context: A Response to Kang-San Tan

by *Notto R. Thelle*

First of all, I want to thank Dr. Tan for a very stimulating and challenging paper. With only twenty-five minutes at my disposal, I will have to limit myself, beginning with a few comments about the implications of changing strategies and positions, and concluding with some reflections about sharing the Christian message in a Buddhist context.

### Rethinking Missions

Reading Dr. Tan's consistent "rethinking missions," I was reminded about the slogan from the 1932 report by the commission led by Harvard professor William Ernest Hocking: *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years*. Traveling through India, Burma, China, and Japan, observing, dialoguing with missionaries and church leaders, Hocking and his team came up with a critical evaluation. Instead of traditional missionary work, they wanted a cultural and religious transformation in the East, suggesting a greater

emphasis on education and welfare, transfer of power from missionary societies to local leadership, less reliance on evangelizing, and a respectful appreciation of Asian religions.

Hocking's review of traditional missionary activities represented a liberal theological position. Dr. Tan's critical evaluation of the missionary impact in the East and his prescription for a transformation of mission represent a conservative evangelical missiology. The radical reorientation, however, has some striking similarities with the findings of the Hocking report nearly ninety years ago. It might be interesting to make a comparative study of the positions, and then to reflect upon the differences.

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"frontier" as a zone of contacts and  
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"with no one group being able to  
establish dominance."**

### *Frontier Mission*

In my ears "frontier mission" sounded like an echo of the militant strategies of the past, such as the colonial expansion towards the western frontier in American history, or missionary frontiers in the "Christian occupation of China" and other countries in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> I was relieved to see that Dr. Tan defines "frontier" as a zone of contacts and creative exchanges between adherents of different religions, open and liminal, "with no one group being able to establish dominance." If I have understood him correctly, frontier is almost the same as I describe in my two small books about experiences in Japan: the mutual dialogue and interchange that takes place when people really meet one another in the "borderland between East and West."<sup>2</sup>

The frontier, then, is not a battlefield where other religions are to be conquered and replaced, but an open space of hospitality, where faith is shared in a listening and receptive dialogue. The Christian contribution is clear enough: the message about God's love in Jesus Christ. At the same time, one expects that one's own message may be transformed in the process, just as the other may be transformed by the sharing and somehow integrate our message about the love of God in Jesus Christ.

### *Paradigm Shift?*

If Dr. Tan's paper represents what is happening on the frontier of evangelical missiology, I am tempted to use the term "paradigm shift." It deals not only with changes in strategies and revisions of a few theological viewpoints, but a reorientation that may

well concern every aspect of theological understanding. A few years ago, I made some observations about the changes in missions between the two Protestant mission meetings which took place in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910 and 2010. I am sorry for the simplifications, but here are some of the central points of difference between the two mission consultations, separated as they were by a century—and admittedly, the earlier one had a markedly higher percentage of evangelicals in attendance.

- *The torment of hell* and the expectation that millions of pagans were doomed to perdition was one of the strongest drives to foreign mission in the early period. This seems to be almost forgotten by ecumenical and World Council of Churches mission leaders, and even by some evangelicals.
- *The eschatological urge* and the conviction that the end will come when the gospel has been proclaimed to all nations (Matt 24:14) does not seem to be important to the ecumenical group at all.
- *The triumphalistic expectation* that Christianity would conquer the world and defeat other religions is gone.
- The *rejection of the East* as barbaric, superstitious, and without vitality is replaced by an openness to the wisdom and religious experience of Eastern religions.
- Conservative missiology represented by Lausanne Movement initially emphasized *exclusivist positions*, but the actual experiences of dialogue and the insights from anthropology and cross-cultural studies have brought a certain nuance to traditional exclusivism with a more open awareness of the divine presence, or as some would say, the witness of the Holy Spirit, in other religions and cultures.

### *Theological Implications*

I for one am convinced that such a rethinking is necessary. Sometimes we forget, however, that new strategies not only imply a new understanding of the context but may lead to a new reading of the text (the message). If strategies and positions were mistaken, perhaps the very foundation of theology was wrong, or at least mistaken. I am glad to see that such an awareness is expressed in the reflections of Dr. Tan and other evangelical church leaders.

In sum, the relationship to other religions is not only something that happens on the periphery of our theology. It goes to the very center and touches every aspect of our theology: the doctrine of God, the theology of revelation, the way we read and interpret the Scriptures, Christology, and the understanding of Jesus as savior, incarnation theology, soteriology, ecclesiology (what is the church?), and the theology of the spirit. All aspects of theology are challenged.

There is a clear direction in the process described in Dr. Tan's paper, but I don't see exactly where it ends. And I think we as missiologists have to accept that such a fluidity and uncertainty is a part of our exploration.

### *Is Inreligionisation the Last Challenge?*

I heartily agree that especially for churches and missions working in the East the religious traditions—including folk religion—are an important context for communicating the message of Jesus Christ. We must be willing to investigate new approaches, allowing Eastern religious insights and experiences to inspire and challenge theological thinking and practice.

I have some reservations, however, when “inreligionisation” is described as “the last frontier in Christian mission.” There are so many other frontiers in Asia, ideological frontiers that change the lives of people much more than traditional religion: communism in various forms, capitalism, consumerism, various types of nationalism, feminism, scientism, secularism. I could mention many other frontiers but leave it just as a question: Are we as religiously concerned people sometimes too preoccupied with religion, and forget the many other frontiers which are shaping people’s lives and which we must encounter in friendly and critical dialogue?

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### *The Buddhist Frontier*

I will have to limit myself to a few observations and comments when it comes to the relationship with Buddhism—my observations are primarily from the Mahayana context, but I hope it is relevant also for other Buddhist traditions.

### **Buddhist Perspectives on Other Faiths**

In Buddhism there are two basic ways of relation to other religions or competing philosophies: rejection and integration, in Japanese *shakubuku* and *shōju*. The first one is the attempt to conquer and subdue others through aggressive arguments and tough criticism. The other one is the generous and tolerant attempt to embrace the other, accepting the differences, with the expectation that the other will be transformed in the process and ultimately integrated. Both positions proclaim the uniqueness and superiority of the specific Buddhist truth but use opposite strategies.

The second one has certainly been the most common, allowing Buddhism to adapt and penetrate new cultures, enabling it to take root in new cultures. On the other hand, some would say that such a form of adaptation in many cases has changed Buddhism so much that it has almost lost its soul.

When evangelical missiology now seems to prefer the policy of *shōju*—the generous embrace expecting transformation—one should be aware of the possible implications. Our Western Christianities have to some extent been so transformed by being integrated in historical contexts that one sometimes wonders whether they have lost their souls. That may also happen in the East.

An interesting case study in this context would be to explore whether the Buddhist *mandalas* in the Mahayana tradition could offer a visual model for describing how Christ—or God in Christ—is the ultimate truth, but still related to all sorts of religious search and longing for truth.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mutual Attraction and Rejection**

The relationship between Buddhism and Christianity has some paradoxical aspects: two seemingly incompatible religious worldviews seem to be drawn towards each other. On the one hand, the relationship arouses contradiction and protest, because the two religions challenge each other’s very foundations. At the same time, however, when Buddhists and Christians meet in a trusting relationship, the distance may disappear, and despite all differences they seem to be in a common sphere. They inspire each other, influence each other, and are transformed in each other’s presence.

For some Japanese Christians—and I assume similar things are relevant also in other contexts—it may begin with a search for spiritual roots. When they converted to Christianity, they got a new identity that had no room for past experiences and religious insights. But after many years, some Christians begin to feel rootless and restless. They have phantom pains in the part of their spiritual bodies they had cut away. They feel the need to rediscover their spiritual roots. Buddhism had been a part of their lives, and somehow, they have to integrate their past. The search for spiritual roots may result in people drifting away from the church—they don’t belong anymore and disappear out the backdoor. It may also lead to a deepening of faith in a process where the past is integrated, and their faith is enriched by a broader vision of God’s presence in their own religious past.

It is perhaps more surprising that Japanese Buddhists often have similar feelings about Christianity. It is often expressed as a sense of affinity with the innermost sources of Jesus’ life. One example is of one of my friends, an old Buddhist philosopher who in his youth came across the Gospels and was drawn into the magnetic field of the gospel stories. “After reading the Gospels twice,” he said, “I had to say to myself: If this is Christianity, then I am a Christian.” One of my mentors in Japan, the Buddhist philosopher Keiji Nishitani,<sup>4</sup> has all his life been concerned with the message of Jesus and the Christian faith in its many forms. He could be ruthlessly critical of Christianity but had a loving attraction to Christ and his message. “I can never be a Christian,” he said. “At most I can be described as one who is on the way to Christian faith (in German: *ein werdender Christ*).”

I could have mentioned many other cases. Most important and somewhat depressing, however, it is not the Christian church and its preaching and teaching which appeal. It is the gospel stories and the person of Jesus that sometimes challenge Buddhists with an inexplicable attraction. They don't become Christians, but they somehow belong to the invisible community of Jesus' friends.<sup>5</sup>

### Jesus

In my own research about Buddhist-Christian relations in Japan, I depicted three different types of images of Jesus: 1) the intrusive and provocative Jesus who is met with deep-rooted animosity; 2) the absurd and unreasonable Christ of Christian dogmas who is met with ridicule and scorn; and 3) the wise spiritual master with Bodhisattva qualities who is like a close friend and companion on the way.<sup>6</sup>

The *intruder Jesus* is described as the messianic preacher whose message is in conflict with the ideals of social harmony, destroying the family and the state. The reason is partly that Jesus came with Western powers that seemed to threaten the Japanese nation and Eastern traditions, partly because his prophetic message had elements of subversiveness: his identification with the downtrodden and his criticism of injustice and the religious and political authorities. The prophetic anger in Jesus' message is disturbing in a country that tends to regard "harmony" as the ultimate goal of the nation, but it also has its attraction as a source of creative unrest. In our relationship with Eastern traditions, we should not forget the subversive and critical element in the prophetic mission of Jesus.

While Christianity may appeal to Buddhists with its message about love and forgiveness, the dogmatic formulations seldom impress them. The story of Jesus' death may appeal as the ultimate sign of selfless love, but the traditional doctrines about atonement and substitutional suffering are regarded as absurd theories about an angry and unpredictable God who is swayed by his emotions, and who is not able to love without seeing blood and suffering. The reaction is a reminder that a one-sided emphasis on certain types of atonement theories is doomed to be misunderstood and will have to be reformulated in new cultural contexts. This is a vital element in evangelical theology that needs rethinking. The theological reformulation has taken place throughout our Christian history, and it needs to be continued also in the Eastern context.

One approach has been mentioned by Dr. Tan, the Bodhisattva way. A Bodhisattva is one who vows to abandon his or her own salvation in order to guide all sentient beings toward the ultimate goal. In the world of mythology, they are the saints who have achieved perfection after endless periods of asceticism and self-discipline, and finally can become divine helpers. They are worshiped throughout the East.

Using the Bodhisattva vow as an important metaphor, the cross of Jesus—or even the life of Jesus—may be described as God's vow to save the world. While the Bodhisattva is putting

his own salvation at stake, God is, so to say, vowing by his own existence, putting his own divinity at stake, and emptying himself for the salvation of the world. I have tried to develop the theme in an article some years ago, describing the cross as God's ultimate vow, and I hope others will develop it further.<sup>7</sup>

Most people, however, tend to grasp the point more directly without such complicated reflections. They are moved by the stories about Jesus giving himself for others. Sacrificial love is not a part of Buddhist philosophy, but Buddhist stories, people's life experiences, folklore, and popular traditions, abound in examples of self-abandoning and even substitutional love: animals sacrificing their lives for the flock, Bodhisattvas taking upon themselves the pain of others, people sacrificing the most sacred treasures for the needy. Against such a background, Jesus may become a radiant model of what people have longed for. He was the grain of wheat which bears fruit because it fell into the earth and died. He freely gave his life for the unworthy. He identified himself with the downtrodden. When he was born, the angels sang, "Glory be to God in the highest!" When he died, people could sing, "Glory be to God in the lowest!" His work was fulfilled when he died on a cross. The Christian church and everything connected with it—church buildings and dogmas, ecclesiastical structures and rituals—is often experienced as an imported religion with an alien taste and smell, but sometimes Jesus walks directly out of the pages of the gospel, across the boundaries of the church, and into the religious reality of the East. Perhaps we should have greater expectations about the stories than the doctrinal expositions.

While it may be meaningful to regard Jesus as a spiritual master, perhaps even the ultimate manifestation of divine love, it seems difficult, however, to accept him as the only one, unique and with no one else at his side. That is, perhaps, the challenge for Christians in the East. Will the mutual transformation involve a renewed reflection on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ?

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### Two Language Worlds—Insight and Relation

There is no time to go into detail about the conceptual worlds of Christianity and Buddhism. Let me just remind you that the two religions seem to operate in two different language worlds, one with a language related to the eye and seeing, and the other related to the ear, hearing, and responding. That may be a barrier for understanding, but also an invitation to see how different types of language can open new insights.



Buddhism is about seeing. Buddha is "the Awakened One." The eightfold path begins with "right view" or "right insight," and continues with "right thought." The entire Buddhist teaching is expressed in terms related to the eye and insight: awakening, enlightenment, awareness, vision, seeing one's nature, understanding, wisdom, illumination, light, and mental clarity. To see, one has to withdraw from the emotional and mental relationships that blind the mind's eye. The Buddhist truth tends to be expressed in impersonal categories.

I am not saying that there is no hearing in Buddhism and no seeing in Christianity. But the core language in Christianity is hearing and responding. God speaks and the human person turns his ear to God. The one who hears is attentive, and the relationship is established. When Jesus was asked for a summary of his teaching, he replied by combining two fundamental relationships: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind . . . and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37–39). The entire Christian teaching is expressed in relational categories: love, justice, obedience, broken relationships and reconciliation, responsibility, sin, guilt and forgiveness, and others. It is no exaggeration to say that the entire narrative and symbolic world of the Bible is incomprehensible without this dynamic relationship between hearing, speaking, and responding in an action of love. God is consequently described in personal terms: father, lord, protector, king, friend.

From such a standpoint, the preference for the language of relationships which is found in Christianity and the Semitic religions is bound not only to seem strange, but to present an open conflict with Buddhism's high appreciation of the withdrawn clarity of the unruffled gaze. One who emphasizes mental withdrawal and non-attachment will not easily understand or accept the passionate commitment to the world, to people, and to God, in Christianity.

I ask myself: how can the eye dialogue with the ear and the mouth? How can the clear and analytic eye of Buddhism even begin to understand Christianity's preference for personal expressions, its anthropomorphic images of God and emotional relationships, with the emphasis on obedience, faith, love, and the yearning for a meeting face to face? And how can Christianity learn to understand how the Buddhist search for mental clarity and the rather withdrawn relationship to the world leads to compassion? A mutual investigation of the two types of languages may inspire Buddhists and Christians to see new dimensions in their respective commitments, or perhaps, rather, to see more clearly dimensions in their own traditions which have been underestimated.<sup>8</sup>

### Mutual Changes Have Taken Place

We sometimes forget that Buddhism to a great extent has been changed by the encounter with Christianity. The Christian emphasis on social action, practical love, and concern for the neighbor has inspired modern Buddhism to discover hidden

potentials in its very foundation. The Buddhist reform movements from the end of the nineteenth century to the modern types of engaged Buddhists is to a great extent the result of such inspiration and challenge. And many Christian communities have been deeply influenced by Buddhist meditation practices, inspiring them to rediscover aspects of Christian spiritual life that have tended to be forgotten or underestimated.

The challenge for many of us who have been privileged to live on the boundary where faith meets faith, is to investigate further the implications of our insights and experiences. I am grateful for the opportunity to listen to Dr. Tan's paper. My response is a humble attempt to follow up some of the challenges that he has been courageous enough to share.

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### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The expression is used in the national conference of the China Continuation Committee in 1922: *The Christian Occupation of China*, ed. Milton Stauffer, (Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922.)
- <sup>2</sup> Notto R. Thelle, *Who Can Stop the Wind? Travels in the Borderland between East and West*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010); *Dear Siddhartha: Letters and Dialogues in the Borderland between East and West*, (Oslo: 2005; not yet published in English). It also reminds me of Karl Ludvig Reichelt's vision a hundred years ago, who expected that the Buddhists would one day bring some of their sacred treasures into the sanctuary of Christ.
- <sup>3</sup> I have suggested some possible models in "Lutheran Theology Between Exclusivism and Openness: Reconsidering the Classical Lutheran Distinctions Between 'Creation' and 'Salvation,'" in *Interactive Pluralism in Asia: Religious Life and Public Space*, eds., Simone Sinn & Tong Wing-Sze (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016): 59–72.
- <sup>4</sup> Nishitani did not want to be identified as a Buddhist, but most readers would agree that his basic way of thinking was primarily inspired by Buddhism.
- <sup>5</sup> I have written about Nishitani and others in the chapter "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," in *Who Can Stop the Wind? Travels in the Borderland between East and West*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.)
- <sup>6</sup> See Notto R. Thelle, "Foe and Friend: The Changing Image of Christ in Japanese Buddhism," in *Japanese Religions* 12:2 (1982); "Christianity in a Buddhist Environment," *Cross Currents* 35:2–3 (1985).
- <sup>7</sup> See "God's Vow: A Pure Land Perspective on the Cross of Christ," in *Ching Feng* (New Series) 7.1–2 (2006):153–163, where I have given a detailed analysis of the theme of "vow" in Buddhism and in the Bible and suggested how the cross of Jesus could be understood as God's ultimate vow of salvation.
- <sup>8</sup> For a more thorough analysis, see the chapter, "Relation, Awareness, and Energy – Three Languages, Three Worlds? An Approach to Mutual Understanding," in *The Concept of God in Global Dialogue*, eds. Werner G. Jeanrond & Aasulv Lande (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005). Several chapters in *Who Can Stop the Wind?* and *Dear Siddhartha* deal with these themes.

# A Fresh Look at the Hermeneutical Process

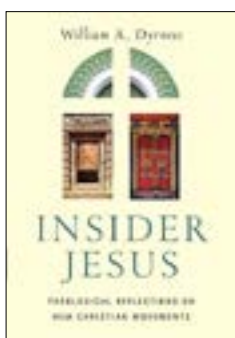


## Seeking Church: Emerging Witnesses to the Kingdom

by Darren T. Duerksen and William A. Dyrness | IVP Academic, 2019

New expressions of church that are arising among Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and other non-Christian religious communities have raised intense discussion in missiological circles. The authors address these issues by exploring how all Christian movements are engaged in a “reverse hermeneutic,” where the gospel is read and interpreted through existing cultural and religious norms. They examine this process through the lens of emergence theory—the concept that ecclesial communities arise over time in ways that reflect specific historical, cultural and religious dynamics. The different models and markers are illustrated with contemporary case studies.

[https://www.amazon.com/Discovering-Church-Darren-Duerksen/dp/0830851054/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=NTNHQEO74T05&keywords=seeking+church+duerkxen&qid=1663643719&s=books&prefix=seeking+church+duerkxen%2Cstripbooks%2C70&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Discovering-Church-Darren-Duerksen/dp/0830851054/ref=sr_1_1?crid=NTNHQEO74T05&keywords=seeking+church+duerkxen&qid=1663643719&s=books&prefix=seeking+church+duerkxen%2Cstripbooks%2C70&sr=1-1)

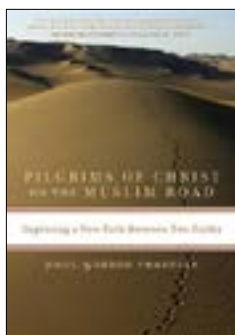


## Insider Church: Theological Reflections on New Christian Movements

by William A. Dyrness | IVP Academic, 2016

The author brings a rare blend of cultural and theological engagement to uncover how God may be working in Jesus followers within those Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist movements that elude conventional theological categories. He examines the concept of religion in the biblical narrative and how it's been reshaped categorically in the post-Reformation West. He moves beyond contextualization and calls for a more culturally embedded understanding of religion that will demand fresh “hermeneutical space” for these movements as they emerge.

[https://www.amazon.com/Insider-Jesus-Theological-Reflections-Christian-ebook/dp/B01LW4YJUR/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=1YG9F1717CWMQ&keywords=insider+jesus&qid=1653683777&s=books&prefix=insider+jesus%2Cstripbooks%2C62&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Insider-Jesus-Theological-Reflections-Christian-ebook/dp/B01LW4YJUR/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1YG9F1717CWMQ&keywords=insider+jesus&qid=1653683777&s=books&prefix=insider+jesus%2Cstripbooks%2C62&sr=1-1)



## Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road: Exploring a New Path Between Two Faiths

by Paul-Gordon Chandler | Cowley Publications, 2007

The author presents fresh thinking in the area of Christian-Muslim relations through the life of the Syrian novelist Mazhar Mallouhi, who is widely read in the Middle East. Mallouhi, who is familiar with evangelical Christianity but who self-identifies as a “Sufi Muslim follower of Christ,” seeks to bridge the chasm of misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians through his life, writings and witness. In response to the way Muslims identify the Christian faith with the cultural prejudices of Westerners, Chandler boldly explores how these two major religions—which share much common heritage—cannot only co-exist, but also enrich each other.

[https://www.amazon.com/Pilgrims-Christ-Muslim-Road-Exploring-ebook/dp/B0024NKM90/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?crid=7OXOIKBZPLKX&keywords=paul-gordon+chandler&qid=1653685225&s=books&prefix=paul-gordon+chandler+%2Cstripbooks%2C69&sr=1-2](https://www.amazon.com/Pilgrims-Christ-Muslim-Road-Exploring-ebook/dp/B0024NKM90/ref=sr_1_2?crid=7OXOIKBZPLKX&keywords=paul-gordon+chandler&qid=1653685225&s=books&prefix=paul-gordon+chandler+%2Cstripbooks%2C69&sr=1-2)