

Christian Witness among Religious Others:

A Korean Mennonite Perspective

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The WCC'S Tenth Assembly in Busan and Turmoil in the Korean Church

It was a very strange scene at the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Tenth Assembly at Busan in October 2013. There were daily protests of the WCC assembly in front of the convention center where the assembly took place. The strong protest movement among Christians is the hottest news in the media.

Many public statements came out against the WCC's Tenth Assembly in Busan. These statements widely circulated in the church with provocative video clips from the Canberra assembly in 1991, clips containing the Korean theologian Chung Hyun-Kyung's controversial speech and performance.² These statements largely represent the voice of Conservative-Reformed-Presbyterian denominations. I will briefly describe a statement from the largest Conservative Presbyterian denomination, HapTong: The General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea (GAPCK).

According to this statement: (1) the WCC is rejecting the inerrancy and verbal inspiration of the Bible; (2) the WCC is rejecting the distinctiveness and finality of Christ as the savior; (3) the WCC is advocating a syncretic pneumatology; (4) the WCC is insisting on a false soteriology and ecclesiology; (5) the WCC is advocating religious pluralism; (6) the WCC is accepting of same-sex relationships; and (7) the WCC is overlooking the importance of mission and

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² Chung Hyun-Kyung is a Korean theologian and teaches at Union Theological Seminary in New York. In 1991, she was invited to speak at the WCC's Seventh Assembly in Canberra. Her speech and performance created a huge controversy, and she was accused of syncretism by conservatives.

evangelism.³

These accusations also reflect some of the long historical debates over the WCC. Several points in particular caught my attention, such as the fact that five out of seven accusations directly or indirectly related to the theology of religions. Clearly, the primary theological concern of this conservative denomination is the theology of religions: the distinctiveness and finality of Christ, interreligious dialogue, religious pluralism, and religious syncretism.

In this paper I will take a look at important theological-missiological documents with a particular interest in the theology of religions and its implications for the mission and evangelism of the church. I examine how these documents define and describe religious others, interreligious dialogue, and religious pluralism, and how they discuss mission–evangelism–witness–proselytism in a multireligious context. These are the questions that I want to address here.

To do that I chose to look at *Together towards Life*, which is the official statement on mission and evangelism from the recent WCC assembly. I will also discuss the *Cape Town Commitment* and the progress of the discussion among evangelicals regarding the theology of religions. Although there are wide varieties of interpretations and implications of these statements and documents, these documents have their own normative meanings and values. At the least, without these documents, we cannot even start a dialogue among ourselves, as Christians dedicated to the task of witnessing among religious others.

I also read these documents with my own context in mind as a Korean Mennonite studying at an evangelical institution in the United States. I hope that this interesting combination provides a better understanding of theology of religions in a broad context. I will also propose an Anabaptist option for the church in Korea and beyond.

A Critical Reading of Ecumenical Documents

Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation (EA)

Before we discuss *Together towards Life*, we need to take a brief look at EA, produced by Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) and approved by the WCC's Central Committee in July 1982.⁴ The historical background of this document recalls significant documents on mission and evange-

3 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, "A Public Statement of Objection to WCC Tenth Assembly in Busan, 2013," *Accusation* (2013), accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.accusation.kr/board/board.php?board=myhome-board&command=body&no=643&category=14>.

4 World Council of Churches, "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7, no. 2 (April 1983): 65-71.

lism such as the *Lausanne Covenant* (1974) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975). At the WCC assembly in Nairobi in 1975, the intense debate on evangelism called for the WCC to articulate clearly the relationship of the traditional missionary outreach of the churches with involvement in justice issues. As a result, *EA* has a strong emphasis on the “proclamation of the Gospel among the poor” and the missionary role of the local congregation.⁵ We will find the theology of religion behind this document in section 7, “Witness among People of Living Faiths.” I will now highlight statements 42 and 43.

42. The Word is at work in every human life. In Jesus of Nazareth the Word became a human being. The wonder of his ministry of love persuades Christians to testify to people of every religious and non-religious persuasion of this decisive presence of God in Christ. In him is our salvation. Among Christians there are still differences of understanding as to how this salvation in Christ is available to people of diverse religious persuasions. But all agree that witness should be rendered to all.

43. Such an attitude springs from the assurance that God is the Creator of the whole universe and that he has not left himself without witness at any time or any place. The Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding and in places that to us are least expected. In entering into a relationship of dialogue with others, therefore, Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way he deals with humanity. For Christians who come from cultures shaped by another faith, an even more intimate interior dialogue takes place as they seek to establish the connection in their lives between their cultural heritage and the deep convictions of their Christian faith.⁶

There is a strong notion of the Trinitarian approach to the theology of religions in these statements. However, “the Word” is presented as higher than God’s decisive presence in Jesus of Nazareth. Also, since God is presented as the Creator of the universe, and the mystery of God’s self-limitation in Christ is unthinkable, the Creator God must reveal himself beyond Jesus of Nazareth. The Spirit of God is also constantly working beyond human understanding, therefore there are some things we do not know. Each person of the Trinity is not concisely standing for the assurance of “the decisive presence of God in Christ” and “our salvation in Christ” in Scripture and tradition; rather the three persons of the Trinity stretch the conventional idea and traditional un-

5 Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, “From Missions to Mission,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3, 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tssetsis (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004), 137.

6 WCC, “Mission and Evangelism,” 65–71.

derstanding. Of course, although we have different understandings about other religions, “all agree that witness should be rendered to all.”

Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes (TTL)

TTL was approved by the WCC’s Central Committee in Crete, Greece, in September 2012 and officially adopted at the WCC assembly in Busan in 2013.⁷ This document follows the spirit of the *EA* in 1982, yet tries to clarify the challenges that churches are facing today.

TTL consists of three larger parts: (1) “Together towards Life” (statements 1–11); (2) “Mission and the Spirit of Life” (12–100); and (3) “Feast of Life: Concluding Affirmations” (101–12). The middle part is also divided into four subsections: “Spirit of mission: breath of life” (12–35); “Spirit of liberation: mission from the margins” (36–54); “Spirit of community: church on the move” (55–79), and “Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for all” (80–100).

The first part, statements 1–11, identifies the new challenges and sets the framework of mission in order to respond to these challenges. The first statement clarifies the nature of mission in this document: “God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth.” This statement demonstrates the theme of *missio Dei* with its Trinitarian emphasis and also makes a strong connection to the Holy Spirit as the life-giver, which is the main theme throughout *TTL*.

We can identify some of the document’s major concerns in statements 2–10: (2) “mission in a changing and diverse world” (3) “mission as a life-affirming and transformative spirituality;” (4) “the good news for every part of creation;” (5) “mission and “the shift of the center of gravity of Christianity;” (6) “the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins;” (7) mission and the global scale of ecological and economic injustice;” (8) “proclaiming God’s love and justice in an individualized, secularized, and materialized world;” (9) common witness and life-giving mission “in a world of many religions and cultures;” (10) and the renewal and unity of the church.

This scaffolding allows us to see the location where theology of religions take place and how theology of religions plays out for mission and evangelism, and vice versa. There are also four explicit statements (93–96) regarding interreligious dialogue in this document. The subtitle to these statements is “Evan-

⁷ World Council of Churches, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2012), accessed December 26, 2014, http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes#_edn28.

lism, Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Presence.” These statements are located relatively close to end of the document, which follows the similar order of *EA*.

93. In the plurality and complexity of today’s world, we encounter people of many different faiths, ideologies and convictions. We believe that the Spirit of Life brings joy and fullness of life. God’s Spirit, therefore, can be found in all cultures that affirm life. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways, and we do not fully understand the workings of the Spirit in other faith traditions. We acknowledge that there is inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities. Therefore, authentic mission makes the “other” partner in, not an “object” of mission.⁸

Unsurprisingly, pneumatology is the center of interfaith dialogue in *TTL*. Plurality and complexity is the given context, and in this given context the “Spirit of Life” or “God’s Spirit” or “Holy Spirit” or “Spirit” is working in mysterious ways among other “life-giving spiritualities.” There is a noticeable change from the “Word-” or Christ-centered discourse of *EA* to the Spirit-centered discourse of *TTL*.

Although evangelism and dialogue are not separable from each other in the context of a multireligious society, in a Christendom setting evangelism and dialogue are in tension. Again, in a multireligious society it is impossible to think of evangelism without encountering religious others and without dialogue.

The following statement shows the distinctiveness of dialogue and its close relationship with evangelism:

95. Evangelism and dialogue are distinct but interrelated. Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also “a mutual encounter of commitments,” sharing the good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it. Furthermore, authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action and in “the spirit of dialogue”—“an attitude of respect and friendship.” Evangelism entails not only proclamation of our deepest convictions, but also listening to others and being challenged and enriched by others (Acts 10).⁹

This statement clearly rejects the notion that evangelism is the purpose of dialogue. Evangelism and interfaith dialogue are closely related, but they are not the same. Statement 90 shows the proper evangelism in a multireligious world. We may find here some further clues as to *TTL*’s position on the relationship

8 WCC, *Together towards Life*.

9 WCC, *Together towards Life*.

between evangelism and dialogue.

90. Aware of tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and varied interpretations of Christian witness, authentic evangelism must always be guided by life-affirming values, as stated in the joint statement on “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct”:

- a. Rejection of all forms of violence, discrimination and repression by religious and secular authority, including the abuse of power—psychological or social.
- b. Affirming the freedom of religion to practice and profess faith without any fear of reprisal and or intimidation. Mutual respect and solidarity which promote justice, peace and the common good of all.
- c. Respect for all people and human cultures, while also discerning the elements in our own cultures, such as patriarchy, racism, casteism, etc., that need to be challenged by the gospel.
- d. Renunciation of false witness and listening in order to understand in mutual respect.
- e. Ensuring freedom for ongoing discernment by persons and communities as part of decision-making.
- f. Building relationships with believers of other faiths or no faith to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.¹⁰

Interestingly, the major part of this statement is an adaptation from another document, “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.”¹¹ There are a few quotations throughout *TTL*, but this is the only one extensive adaptation.

Critical evaluation of *Together towards Life*

TTL reflects not only ecumenical reflections and voices. As we already observed, *TTL* adapts a joint document written with other Christian bodies: the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church, and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA),¹² and includes content

¹⁰ WCC, *Together towards Life*.

¹¹ This document was issued in June 2011 by the WCC, the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church, and the World Evangelical Alliance. “The document represents a broad consensus on appropriate missionary conduct ‘according to gospel principles’ when sharing the Christian faith,” “Editorial,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35 (2011): 194.

¹² “The CWME working groups have been able to draw on rich resources of

from the Cape Town Commitment from the Lausanne Movement.¹³ It is fair to mention that *TTL* shows a strong intention to listen to other Christian bodies, to discern with them and include their voices as well.

However, the strong pneumatological emphasis in *TTL* is controversial. When *TTL* chose the phrase “Spirit—the Life-Giver,” it not only serves as an overarching theme, it also pushes significant changes from “theology” (mission of God) to “pneumatology” (mission of Spirit). The Life-Giving Spirit is now the instrument of discernment for God’s mission in this world.

Noort argued this way: since *TTL* claims that the Spirit of God is at work where life is affirmed and blossoms, “the affirmation of life” (1) serves as an instrument to observe where God’s Spirit is at work, and (2) establishes a theological bridge between Christian faith, secular worldviews, indigenous religions, and wisdom traditions.¹⁴ This is an important discussion regarding the theology of religions. There is no clear distinction between God’s Spirit and the spirit of the world, and even the meaning of “life” is loosely defined in this discussion.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen once stated that “Christian trinitarian theology anchoring within the biblical and classical theological parameters, maintains that the talk about Father, Son and Spirit is the only possible way of identifying the God of the Bible.”¹⁵ However, there are constant efforts from religious pluralism circles towards “mythologizing the concept of God” or replacing the theological concept, using such as “Ultimate Reality” or “the Real”, in the arena of the theology of religions. In the case of *TTL*, a strong emphasis on “life” and using the terms “Spirit of Life,” “God’s Spirit,” “Holy Spirit,” and “Spirit” in an interchangeable manner can be considered as a case in point.¹⁶

reflection on mission and evangelism both from within the WCC family and also from other bodies, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Lausanne Movement. Pentecostal and charismatic reflections also enhance the document.” Kirsteen Kim, “Introducing the New Statement on Mission and Evangelism,” *International Review of Mission* 101 (2012): 316.

13 Statement 81 starts with the sentence “evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him,” which is an adaptation from *The Cape Town Commitment, The Lausanne Movement* (2011), Part I, 7(b), accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>.

14 Gerrit Noort, “So What?—Dutch Responses to the New Mission Statement,” *International Review of Mission* 102, no. 397 (November 2013): 194.

15 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 169.

16 Bård Maeland, “A Free-Wheeling Breath of Life? Discerning the Missio Spiritus,” *International Review of Mission* 102, no. 397 (November 2013): 137–47.

TTL shows a new synthesis of theology of religions and mission and evangelism under the Spirit-led Trinitarian formula in a multireligious world. However, there are remaining questions such as its view on the nature of the Trinity (mutual witnessing among the Trinity), its biblical and historical-traditional foundations for its understanding of the Trinity (the distinctiveness of Trinitarian Christianity), etc.

A Critical Reading of Evangelical Documents

Lausanne Covenant

Many Korean Christians who boldly protested against the WCC's Tenth Assembly in Busan identify themselves as evangelicals.¹⁷ If, as they would charge, the WCC represents a false "liberal theology," then what is the evangelicals' theology of religions? What is the historical development of evangelicals' attitude towards religious others and dialogue in this multireligious world?

We need a historical consideration regarding the progress of the WCC and the ecumenical movements and their direct and indirect relationship with the Lausanne Movement.¹⁸ The first Lausanne Congress shares a common historical context of the 1960s and 1970s with ecumenical movements. Often the Lausanne Movement is considered as a reaction to the ecumenical movement. There were great efforts to reach consensus on the meaning of gospel and an emphasis on evangelism among evangelicals. According to John Stott, who was considered to be the leading figure of the evangelical movement from the 1960s through the 1990s, although Edinburgh 1910 was a significant gathering in mission history and is also considered to be the beginning of ecumenical movement, there were no theological-doctrinal discussions regarding "the con-

17 Although there are varieties among Korean Christianity, but they used the term "evangelical" as the opposite word for "ecumenical," without a deep theological understanding of evangelicalism.

18 The Lausanne Movement (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization) emerged from the first International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. The Lausanne Covenant from the first congress is still considered to be a significant document on mission and evangelism among evangelicals. Although the Lausanne Movement is often considered as a reactionary movement against the WCC and the ecumenical movement from the evangelical camp, there are many organizations and denominations that have been founded by both sides. Mennonites also made some significant contributions in the early Lausanne Movement as well. See Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), chapter 6: "Christian Mission and Social Justice: Lausanne 1974 and the Challenge from the Majority World."

tents of the gospel, the theology of evangelism and the nature of the church.”¹⁹

In this historical context, the first Lausanne Congress was focused on re-defining evangelism and, not unexpectedly, it is hard to find any explicit and positive statements regard religious others in the *Lausanne Covenant*.

We affirm that there is only one Saviour and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognise that everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies....Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord.²⁰

The sole purpose of statement 3 is to make explicit the affirmation of the uniqueness and universality of Christ. Although statement 3 affirms “general revelation in nature,” it also clearly rejects any notion of “syncretism and dialogue” with other religions. There is no room for dialogue or space for the theology of religions in the *Lausanne Covenant*, other than an “a-theology of religions.” The effort of dialogue is considered as a form of syncretism.

Manila Manifesto

The Second International Congress on World Evangelization took place in 1989 in Manila, Philippines. One of the unique characteristics of Lausanne II was that it served as “the first significant involvement of evangelicals associated with the charismatic movement and global Pentecostalism.”²¹

The *Manila Manifesto* consists of two parts, and includes twenty-one affirmations and twelve themes for mission and evangelism at the end of the twentieth century. Affirmations 4–7 are closely related to the uniqueness and absoluteness of Christ, and affirmation 7 explicitly rejects religious pluralism: “We affirm that other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality, if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to

19 John Stott, *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974–1989* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), xii.

20 Statement 3: “The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ,” *The Lausanne Covenant, The Lausanne Movement*, 1974, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

21 Robert A. Hunt, “The History of the Lausanne Movement, 1974–2010,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35 (2011): 83.

judgment, for Christ is the only way.”²²

As a result of the strong influence of the “charismatic movement and global Pentecostalism,” affirmations 10 and 11 vividly demonstrate the role of the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare in the work of mission and evangelism. In retrospect, this presents a stark contrast with the role of the Spirit in *TTL*.

Finally, we find a paragraph regarding interfaith dialogue here.²³ It conveys repentance for the wrongdoing in the past regarding other religious faiths. At the same time it also shows the limitations and boundaries of interfaith dialogue, which it considers as a subset of evangelistic work.

In the past we have sometimes been guilty of adopting towards adherents of other faiths attitudes of ignorance, arrogance, disrespect and even hostility. We repent of this. We nevertheless are determined to bear a positive and uncompromising witness to the uniqueness of our Lord, in his life, death and resurrection, in all aspects of our evangelistic work including inter-faith dialogue.²⁴

In the *Manila Manifesto*, the sole purpose of interfaith dialogue is clear: evangelism. The *Manila Manifesto* demonstrates the special nature of interfaith dialogue for evangelicals. Compared to the *Lausanne Covenant*, the *Manila Manifesto* provides a small space for the theology of religions, yet the stance behind this statement is of a defensive mode rather than an affirmative mode.

Paragraph 11 provides concrete numbers and tasks for the evangelistic challenge in a graphic way. These descriptions are interesting for our discussion. The *Manila Manifesto* uses two unique terms for the people who need to be reached for Christ: the “unevangelized” and the “unreached.”

Thirdly, there are the unevangelized. These are people who have a minimal knowledge of the gospel, but have had no valid opportunity to respond to it...

Fourthly, there are the unreached. These are the two billion who may never have heard of Jesus as Savior, and are not within reach of Christians of their own people. There are, in fact, some 2,000 peoples or nationalities in which there is not yet a vital, indigenous church movement.²⁵

²² “Affirmation 7” in, *Lausanne Movement*, 1989, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/manifesto/the-manila-manifesto>.

²³ I loosely use the terms “interreligious dialogue” and “interfaith dialogue” in this article, following the usage of my primary sources.

²⁴ *The Manila Manifesto*, “The Whole Gospel: 3. The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ.”

²⁵ *The Manila Manifesto*, “C. The Whole World: 11. The Challenge of AD 2000 and Beyond.”

There are no religious others in these descriptions. I suspect that the people who are unreached or unevangelized do not live in a religious vacuum; we are humans, and religiosity is a unique aspect of our humanness. These are people who live in “living faiths” and are “religious others.” However, the description here does not contain any religious connotation. While the *Manila Manifesto* described the “unevangelized and unreached,” it not only—intentionally or unintentionally—missed the religious context, but it also rejected the necessary discussion of the theology of religions.

Netland explains this evangelical tendency as a selective attention to and omission of the theology of religions:

At least three issues demand attention in a theology of religions: (1) the soteriological question of the destiny of the unevangelized; (2) a theological explanation for the phenomena of human religiosity; and (3) the missiological question of the extent to which we can adapt and build upon aspects of other religious traditions in establishing the church in various cultural contexts. Evangelical theologians have generally focused on the first issue, and missiologists have at least indirectly addressed the third in discussions of contextualization. But the second issue has been largely ignored.²⁶

The *Lausanne Covenant* and *Manila Manifesto* exclusively discuss “the soteriological question” and “the missiological question” without consideration of “human religiosity.” Let us then take a close look at the *Cape Town Commitment* which came out twenty-one years after the *Manila Manifesto*.

Cape Town Commitment

The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization took place in 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa. There were six daily themes for the congress: Truth, Reconciliation, World Faiths, Priorities, Integrity, and Partnership. The theme for the third day was “World Faiths: Bearing witness to the love of Christ among people of other faiths.” Discussing “World Faiths” as a theme for a day was an interesting development for the Lausanne Congress. There had been some presentations and discussions regarding religious others in the past, yet this was a significant change. Later these daily themes were developed as the second part of the *Cape Town Commitment (CTC)*, the “Cape Town Call to Action.” The structure of the congress already reflected the content of the commitment.

²⁶ Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 310.

The *CTC* consists of two parts: “Part I—For the Lord We Love: The Cape Town Confession of Faith” and “Part II—For the World We Serve: The Cape Town Call to Action.” Part I, paragraph D, section 7, titled “We Love God’s World,” provides the core foundation for the view of religious others, and mission and evangelism in this document. It profoundly demonstrates the gospel of Jesus Christ:

We love our neighbours as ourselves. Jesus called his disciples to obey this commandment as the second greatest in the law, but then he radically deepened the demand (from the same chapter), “love the foreigner as yourself” into “love your enemies.”

Such love for our neighbours demands that we respond to all people out of the heart of the gospel, in obedience to Christ’s command and following Christ’s example. This love for our neighbours embraces people of other faiths, and extends to those who hate us, slander and persecute us, and even kill us. Jesus taught us to respond to lies with truth, to those doing evil with acts of kindness, mercy and forgiveness, to violence and murder against his disciples with self-sacrifice, in order to draw people to him and to break the chain of evil. We emphatically reject the way of violence in the spread of the gospel, and renounce the temptation to retaliate with revenge against those who do us wrong. Such disobedience is incompatible with the example and teaching of Christ and the New Testament.²⁷

The statement “we love our neighbours as ourselves” includes everyone, including enemies and neighbors of other faiths. To love our neighbors, including our enemies, is not an easy thing to do. This is a powerful statement and it also reflects some concrete historical contexts, such as 9/11 and the many religious conflicts that followed around the world.²⁸

Part II, section C more explicitly discusses the relationship between evangelism, proselytism, and interreligious dialogue. The subtitle of this section expresses the foundational idea of this document as “love,” which supports the distinction between proselytizing and evangelizing and provides the motivation for evangelism and dialogue.

²⁷ “Section 7, We love God’s world — D,” in *The Cape Town Commitment*.

²⁸ It is interesting in this context to read the common preface for the thirty-one Lausanne Occasional Papers that came out of the 2004 Forum on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, written by the series editor, David Claydon. Claydon, “The Context for the Production of the Lausanne Occasional Papers,” in Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 31, *The Uniqueness of Christ in a Postmodern World and the Challenge of World Religions*, 3–5, *The Lausanne Movement*, 2004, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/844-lop-31.html>.

In view of the affirmations made in The Cape Town Confession of Faith section 7 (d), we respond to our high calling as disciples of Jesus Christ to see people of other faiths as our neighbours in the biblical sense.... We wish to be sensitive to those of other faiths, and we reject any approach that seeks to force conversion on them. Proselytizing....²⁹

These positive attitudes point toward interreligious dialogue. The *CTC* never uses the term or wording for “interreligious” or “interfaith dialogue,” yet this statement clearly refers to the same kind of effort in relation to religious others.

We affirm the proper place for dialogue with people of other faiths, just as Paul engaged in debate with Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue and public arenas. As a legitimate part of our Christian mission, such dialogue combines confidence in the uniqueness of Christ and in the truth of the gospel with respectful listening to others.³⁰

The discussion on the issue of interreligious dialogue in Cape Town started with the statement that “‘love your neighbour as yourself’ includes persons of other faiths.” For evangelicals, those who claim to be “the people of the book,” this reminder of this fundamental biblical mandate is a powerful invitation.

The following statement, statement 2, is even more powerful and concrete: “the love of Christ calls us to suffer and sometimes to die for the gospel.” This is the most forceful expression regarding religious others in the *CTC*:

Suffering may be necessary in our missionary engagement as witnesses to Christ. . . . Being willing to suffer is an acid test for the genuineness of our mission. God can use suffering, persecution and martyrdom to advance his mission. “Martyrdom is a form of witness which Christ has promised especially to honour.” Many Christians living in comfort and prosperity

Claydon explicitly mentions historical events in the follow quotation: “‘9/11,’ the war in Iraq, the war on terror and its reprisals compel us to state that we must not allow the gospel of the Christian faith to be captive to any one geo-political entity. We affirm that the Christian faith is above all political entities. We are concerned and mourn the death and destruction caused by all conflicts, terrorism and war. We call for Christians to pray for peace, to be proactively involved in reconciliation and avoid all attempts to turn any conflict into a religious war. Christian mission in this context lies in becoming peacemakers” (4). Not surprisingly, Claydon emphasized that evangelization is the most important expression of the Lausanne movement, yet he is aware of the situation in which mission and evangelism take place in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, 9/11 was an urgent awakening call for some Christians to rethink mission and evangelism in the context of the multireligious situation and of religious conflicts. Pattaya 2004 was the important pre-event for Cape Town 2010.

²⁹ *Cape Town Commitment*, “IIC. Living the Love of Christ among People of Other Faiths 1. ‘Love Your Neighbour as Yourself’ Includes Persons of Other Faiths.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*

need to hear again the call of Christ to be willing to suffer for him. For many other believers live in the midst of such suffering as the cost of bearing witness to Jesus Christ in a hostile religious culture. They may have seen loved ones martyred, or endured torture or persecution because of their faithful obedience, yet continue to love those who have so harmed them.³¹

While many documents discuss the subject on an abstract theoretical level, the *CTC* in a timely way reintroduces the radical witness of Christ's follower in the world. Furthermore, this is a clear call for nonviolent witness to religious others in this violent world.³² This invitation commands our attention, especially when we consider the ongoing and increasing religious conflict in the world.

Critical evaluation of the *Cape Town Commitment*

The context of Lausanne III and the *CTC* is important for our discussion. Evangelicals are starting to become aware of the complexity of the world. In between Lausanne II and III, evangelicals faced radical changes in the world such as the fall of Berlin Wall, the rapid breakup of the Soviet Union, ecological crisis, and the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks, followed by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This new evangelical response to global issues forms the main backdrop of the *CTC*.³³

The extensive discussion of "religious others" in the *CTC* is evidence of the new awareness of human complexity that includes religiosity. Compared to the *Lausanne Covenant* and the *Manila Manifesto*, while the *CTC* still holds the evangelical claim to the "unique and definitive salvation brought by Christ," it also shows love and tolerance for religious others.³⁴ The *CTC* provides a much improved theological-missiological foundation for Christian witness to religious others and a better position for further discussion of theology of religions as well.

31 *Cape Town Commitment*, "2. The Love of Christ Calls us to Suffer and sometimes to Die for the Gospel."

32 Chris Wright, who drafted the *CTC*, makes a strong connection between Christian pacifism and nonviolent witness in a religiously pluralistic world. See his "What Difference Does Jesus Make?" in *Practicing Truth: Confident Witness in Our Pluralistic World*, eds. David Shenk and Linford Stutzman (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1999).

33 Robert A. Hunt, "The History of the Lausanne Movement, 1974-2010," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35 (2011): 84.

34 Robert J. Schreiter, "From the Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment: A Theological Assessment," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35 (2011): 90.

Suggestions for the Korean Church: An Anabaptist Perspective

As I mentioned at the beginning, I am writing this article with my own context in mind, the context of a Korean Mennonite studying at an evangelical institution in the United States. This unique context brings at least two specific suggestions for Christians in Korea and Anabaptists in a broader context.

Toward a global theology of religions

Many statements and documents from the ecumenical movement are new to me. Born and raised as a (once) conservative Presbyterian, I would seem to have no reason to read ecumenical documents and listen to the “liberals.” However, while I was reading the documents, I was surprised by the constant interactions among Christian bodies and theological camps. “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” is a great example.

In this paper, I have tried to read both ecumenical and evangelical documents as the outcome of a global theologizing process. This process is a result of dialogue among many different Christian bodies. Sadly, in many cases we see what we want to see from such documents. Many of the accusations against the WCC from the Korean (conservative) evangelicals shows this tendency. Although I am concerned about the vague usage of “Spirit” in the *TTL*, I do not reject the whole value of the *TTL* for the sake of the church’s mission and evangelism. However, the more serious problem is that evangelicals also do not read the documents from evangelicals, too.

As a Korean Christian who lives in the twenty-first century, watching the Korean evangelicals’ hostile reaction toward the WCC and ecumenicals is a painful experience. Indeed, there is no future for deep schisms among Christians, especially for the fears and animosity of many evangelicals toward ecumenicals. I want to see a genuine cooperation among evangelical, ecumenical, and other Christians for a common witness in the Korean context, a context that faces increasing challenges.

Vinoth Ramachandra rightly raised the question of religious pluralism in the Asian context; as with religious pluralism in Asia or the Greco-Roman world, religious pluralism is not a brand-new challenge for the global church and its mission.³⁵ Religious pluralism is a religious phenomenon that is part of human history, especially outside western Christendom.

Dermot Lane more explicitly sets the stage for our theological discussion.

³⁵ Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), ix.

His theology of religions begins with the reality of 9/11 and its implications.³⁶ We live in the post-9/11 period, and that means we live in a world where religion has become more important than ever before. The Korean church is not free from this global religious phenomenon.

I think the WCC's Tenth Assembly in Busan left significant theological-missiological questions for the Korean church to address. For the flourishing church in Korea, which is a unique case in the Asian context and where there exists a long multireligious history, how the church responds to these complicated issues of theology of religions is crucial. How should the Korean church witness to religious others? As part of the global church, what is the contribution of the Korean church in this particular endeavor? Of course, I do not have all the answers to these questions, yet my simple—perhaps simplistic—hope is that the Korean church becomes aware of the complexity of both humanity and the world behind the terms “unevangelized and unreached people.” Reading carefully and listening to other Christians' voice is the first step forward to loving religious others.

Threefold testimony in a multi-religious world

As an Anabaptist, what can I contribute to this particular discussion? How do we construct a better theology of religions in a corporate way? One of the ancient texts comes to mind, written in the first century in a very religiously pluralistic world: “This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree” (1 John 5:6–8, English Standard Version).

While John used three elements of testimony for Jesus Christ as the Savior, water, blood, and Spirit have a unique historical connection with the Anabaptist tradition. Anabaptists believe that there are three baptisms: the baptism of Spirit, the baptism of water, and the baptism of blood. Each baptism symbolizes the unique Anabaptist combination of pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. Historically, in many cases their baptism of blood became a great opportunity to witness to their faith, a form of mission and evangelism through radical discipleship in a violent context.

I think this Anabaptist way of understanding baptism allows us to take new steps into forming a Christ-centered theology of religions and to attend to its implications, such as nonviolent interreligious dialogue and witness among

³⁶ Dermot A. Lane, *Stepping Stones to Other Religions: A Christian Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 24.

religious others.

As an analogy, while ecumenicals intentionally emphasize the “Spirit” in their theology of religions, evangelicals try to maintain Christ as the center—for example, by holding up Jesus’ water baptism as a model—but neither camp necessarily emphasizes Jesus’ nonviolent path and his suffering and death—his “baptism of blood.” However, the gospels and epistles consistently refer to Jesus Christ as the role model for Christians living in a religiously diverse and violent world (e.g. Matt. 26:52; Mark 8:34–35; 2 Cor. 4:10–12; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 13:12–13; 1 Pet. 2:18–24).

These three components of testimony are still validating. Here I have a small illustration. I was surprised when I found an article by David Shenk titled, “The Gospel of Reconciliation within the Wrath of Nations” in a Christian encounter with world religions course at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.³⁷ It was one of the required articles for the class. Shenk’s article contains many examples of peacemaking efforts with religious others in a troubled world, and it enabled a whole different discussion for my evangelical friends regarding mission, peace, and reconciliation. It is a small example, yet I count this as an important contribution of Mennonites to the theology of religions and to the broader missiological discussion. We need more stories like this.

Now we live in a world where religion is often considered to be the ultimate source of conflicts. We live in a world where we daily meet people who have a “living faith” in our hometowns. This is the given context for the Christian witness that takes place by deeds and by words. How does one hold the truth firmly and at the same time follow the Spirit? How do we hold God’s mystery in Christ without compromising, and yet share a genuine dialogue with religious others in this violent world? Without cost, without suffering, and without sacrifice it is impossible. As the *Cape Town Commitment* expressed the idea so plainly, “the love of Christ calls us to suffer and sometimes to die for the gospel.”

³⁷ David Shenk, “The Gospel of Reconciliation within the Wrath of Nations,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32 (2008): 3–9.