

# Love and Witness



**Proclaiming the Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
in a Religiously Plural World**

**World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order**



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Faith and Order Paper No. 230



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World Council of Churches

150 Route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100

1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

<http://www.oikoumene.org>

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## I. Introduction

1. *Come and See: A Theological Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* is a paper approved by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2017. It includes an invitation to ponder the role of peace as the Church journeys in a world of many religions. The Church cannot hide from the world: “The pilgrim Church is not a community closed in on itself; rather, it is called to share the joyful news of the gospel in a vibrant and inviting way in the complex realities of today.”<sup>1</sup> These complex realities, however, need to be handled with respect and care: “There is need further to consider the way Christians move together and how witness happens with truthfulness and integrity in a pluralist context. This should occur in a way which shares the gospel without imposing it on others, recognizing the co-pilgrimage of all creation with whom the church shares the world and inviting the world to participate in the good news (Rom. 8:22-23).”<sup>2</sup>

2. This document, *Love and Witness*, fleshes out more fully the insights of *Come and See* with regard to peace and religious plurality. It seeks to engage with the insights of the WCC and others, asking what our many traditions can say together about the encounter with other religions as we journey toward visible unity – engagement that is a necessary part of the Church’s pilgrim way. How does the pilgrim Church journey in the midst of religious plurality in ways that bring joy, peace, and reconciliation to the world? What are the implications of these reflections for the search for Christian unity?

3. The resurrected Jesus Christ before his ascension speaks the following words: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing

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1. *Come and See: A Theological Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, Faith and Order Paper No. 224 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019), §27.

2. *Ibid.*, §28

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Simultaneously, Jesus in his resurrection speaks to the disciples, saying: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). Without detracting from the call to fulfil the Great Commission, and without detracting from the church’s life of evangelization,<sup>3</sup> this paper considers what it means in an age of violence, ostensibly carried out in the name of religion, to be sent by Christ into religious and secular plurality with Christ’s peace. This paper addresses this specific aspect of the Church’s life in relation to the Church’s calling to witness to the God who desires to turn swords into ploughshares (Is. 2:4; Joel 3:10; Micah 4:3).

4. During the past decades, the WCC has addressed the question of religious plurality in many ways. Indeed, as early as its first assembly in 1948, the WCC was considering the lives of the churches in contexts of religious plurality.<sup>4</sup> In a preparatory paper on religious plurality and Christian self-understanding for the World Mission Conference in 2005, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism stressed that salvation belongs to God. We as Christians and churches “do not possess salvation; we participate in it. We do not offer salvation; we witness to it. We do not decide who should be saved; we leave it to the providence of God.”<sup>5</sup>

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3. On the topic of mission and evangelism in relation to visible unity, see Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), “Preparatory Paper No. 1: Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today” (World Council of Churches, 2005).

4. Report of Section III: “The Church and the Disorder of Society,” in *The Church and the Disorder of Society: An Ecumenical Study Prepared Under the Auspices of the World Council of Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1948), 205.

5. CWME, “Preparatory Paper No. 13: Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding” (World Council of Churches, 2005), §47.



5. The WCC has meaningfully engaged interreligious dialogue.<sup>6</sup> Considerable work has been undertaken to work for peace between religions and religious communities. Likewise, the WCC has provided resources for the churches to engage with the pressing issue of the need for peace in an age when some people are weaponizing their religious traditions. This document does not seek to replicate or repeat the immense and significant work that has been done elsewhere in the WCC, but rather to consider what we might say together as the Commission on Faith and Order in our theological reflection on this theme.<sup>7</sup> We reflect upon the history and theology of the church through the lens of religious pluralism in order to frame theologically the task and imperative for Christian churches to pursue the task of peace between peoples of religious difference.

6. As Christians, we trust that we are saved by God's grace through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). Our pilgrimage should bear witness to this saving grace, inviting others to "come and see." During our pilgrimage we give praise to this generous love of God, leaving all judgment to God, and trusting the Son who claims: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

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6. See, for example: "Education for Peace in a Multi-Religious World: A Christian Perspective" (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Council of Churches, 2019), [https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/education\\_forpeace\\_booklet\\_nocropsfinalweb.pdf](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/education_forpeace_booklet_nocropsfinalweb.pdf); "Who Do We Say That We Are?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious World (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), [https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/whodowesaythatweare\\_marketingsample.pdf](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/whodowesaythatweare_marketingsample.pdf); "Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions," 1 January 2004, World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-considerations-for-dialogue-and-relations-with-people-of-other-religions>

7. In his plenary address to the WCC assembly in 2006, the Rev. Dr Rowan Williams addressed the topic of "Christian Identity and Religious Plurality," offering initial theological reflection on this issue, but Faith and Order has yet to make a detailed statement on the issue of religious plurality.

So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16). Together, transformed by grace, we offer *shalom* and hospitality on our journey toward the fulfilment of all creation.

## II. Biblical and Patristic Tradition

7. It is tempting to see religious plurality as a relatively recent and modern issue, made all the more significant in an era of mass migration. But from the very start of the Christian faith and within the Christian scriptures, the truths of God’s grace have been revealed in contexts of religious plurality. At once, scripture affirms that the triune God is both the God who covenants with God’s holy people in the people of Israel and the Church, *and* the God of all creation. When we consider biblical and patristic tradition in this light, there is much that can resource theological reflection on the churches’ task of proclaiming peace at a time of discord between religions.

8. Certainly, scripture attests that there is only one God. The *Shema* (“Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone” [Deut. 6:4]) is at the heart of the faith and piety of the Hebrew scriptures. In the New Testament, it is clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is the unique way to salvation: He is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and only through him can we come to the Father (John 14:6). Christians are called to evangelization, bearing witness to the saving grace of Christ. As scripture teaches us, God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:4-5).<sup>8</sup> Yet, even here, there is the clear statement that Jesus Christ as the one mediator gave himself as a ransom *for all*.

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8. Note that the Greek for “himself human” is *ho anthropos*, in reference to the humanity of Jesus Christ.

9. In affirming that salvation belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ alone, we must not only recognize that Christ sends the disciples out in his peace, but also that Jesus himself in his own life crossed divisions of ethnicity and religious identity. He brought the message of salvation to his own Jewish people, and also to Greeks, Romans, Samaritans, and others. He is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6), and in his life he broke down barriers of division, bringing peace to people of difference – even religious difference. The religious plurality of Jesus’ own culture and the expansiveness of his mission invite us to look afresh at the interplay of faith and religious diversity in scripture. We seek the message of peace that scripture and early Christian tradition brings to multiple contexts of religious difference.

10. In the Old Testament, alongside the intense particularity of the story of Israel, there is also witness to God’s broader purposes in creation. The promises to Noah and the Noahide laws are binding on *all* creation (Gen. 9). There are enigmatic figures outside the covenanting community of Israel whom God uses for God’s perfect purposes: such as Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem; Jethro, priest of Midian; Job; Rahab the spy; and Naaman the Syrian. Furthermore, as well as the repeated call to Israel to put away the foreign gods from among them, there are rules about how to treat gentiles who live among the Jewish people in their observance of the divinely revealed covenant, and admonitions to remember that the people themselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt (see, for example, Ex. 22:20; 23:9; and Lev. 19:33-34). Even as God covenants with the people of Israel, there is the desire to bless the nations, as in Isaiah 42:6.

11. Indeed, even in the establishment of God’s covenant with Abraham through Isaac, there is the promise that God is the God of Ishmael as well: “As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation” (Gen. 17:20). God

repeats these promises in response to Hagar's prayer (the name Hagar itself being Hebrew for "the stranger") even when it seems that Ishmael may die of thirst, having been turned out of his father's home because God's covenant rests with Isaac (Gen. 21:17-20). God makes promises not only to Hagar but also to Abraham regarding his first-born son: "As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring" (Gen. 21:13). Ishmael is not, from the perspective of the biblical narrative, the one through whom the covenant continues. However, at this most intense moment of the establishment of the people of Israel as God's people, God's universal providential grace for those outside the bounds of the nation is clear. This story demonstrates that Yahweh has at least one other people.

12. Jesus Christ fulfills this universality of God's desire and message for all creation across religious divides. In the gospels he is "the light of all people" (John 1:4) as well the glory for his people Israel (Luke 2:32). In Matthew, the visit of the wise men indicates that Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection is significant for all peoples – even those who study the stars and do not know the revelation of God's covenant (Matt. 2:1-12). During Jesus' own life, he was viewed as a religious outsider. This notion is most pronounced in the Gospel of John in a discussion about who the true heirs of Abraham are, with the curious and inaccurate suggestion that Jesus is a Samaritan (John 8:48). The gospels depict Jesus crossing cultural divides, often healing those outside his own religion and people. In the cleansing of the ten lepers in Luke's Gospel, one of the lepers Jesus heals is a Samaritan, and he is the only one who returns to thank Jesus (Luke 17:16-19). Responding to the faith that the centurion (no doubt a pagan) places in Jesus' ability to cure his servant, Jesus states: "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:10-11). In the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus crosses ethnic, religious, cultural and gender barriers in his discourse with the woman (John 4:1-

42). Even in his reticent dealing with the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30), Jesus responds to the needs of the gentile woman without denying the religious distinction between her and himself.

13. Perhaps Jesus' most striking parable is the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The Samaritans were the descendants of the Jews who did not go into exile; they had mixed with the local population, and were hostile to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. Their purity as a people was called into question because, although they recognized only the first five books of the Jewish scriptures, they did not follow Jewish ritual. These issues were focused on the establishment of a rival temple at Mount Gerizim, and the recognition of a different line of priestly descent. Their proximity to and alienation from the Jewish people led to fierce and often violent rivalry between the peoples. Jesus could have told this story in a way that allowed the hero to be a Jew (one of Jesus' own people) who was prepared to place the humanity of another above religious affiliation. He could have done this by making the Samaritan the injured party, contrasting one Jewish man to the other two. But Jesus makes the Samaritan (the religious outsider) the hero, and, shockingly, tells his audience to behave like the Samaritan: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). Jesus commands his audience to be like the religious other in their ethical behaviour even at the potential cost of ritual and religious purity: the potential religious contamination of the dead body for the priests of his era (Luke 10:31-32).

14. The followers of Jesus in the early church were a religious minority, navigating the multiple religious environments of the Roman Empire. Relations between Christians and non-Christians in the first three centuries of the Common Era were, however, complex and often fraught with violence. Early Christians could not count on being able to live the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ within the contexts of peace, respect or tolerance from the dominant religions of the lands in which they sought to be disciples. They found themselves strangers and aliens who at times

were persecuted simply for bearing the name *Christian*. They frequently resonated with the assertion that “indeed all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). An image of the situation of the Old Testament prophets presented in Hebrews (Heb. 11:32-40) strengthens this perception.

15. Justin Martyr (killed in the 2nd century for proclaiming the gospel) argued, for example, that God as Creator exercises God’s providence in all creation through history,<sup>9</sup> revealing Godself not only in Hebrew,<sup>10</sup> but also in pagan prophecy.<sup>11</sup> Justin’s account of the truth of Christ in relation to the *logos spermatikos*, moreover, utilizes Stoic philosophy to suggest that all humans, past and present, can obtain some truth from the Logos who is incarnate in Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in response to the criticism of Christianity that it was a new religion and therefore could not be true, Justin argues that the philosopher Socrates was a Christian before Christ,<sup>13</sup> and that Plato stole his ideas from Moses,<sup>14</sup> indicating the availability of the truth of revelation outside of direct knowledge of the gospel.

16. In Alexandria, so central for Christianity’s developing theology, Jewish, Christian, and pagan people lived together. Christian theologians sought simultaneously to express the truths of revelation to the surrounding people, and to do so not only critically but attending to areas of commonality and in dialogue. Clement, for example, in his *Protrepticus* seeks to convert pagans through his work, criticizing what he sees to be

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9. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin Martyr, Addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius*, Ch. 46, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>

10. *Ibid.*, Chs. 31.

11. *Ibid.*, Ch. 20, 60.

12. See Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin Martyr, addressed to the Roman Senate*, Ch. 13, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0127.htm>; and Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, Ch. 46.

13. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, Ch. 46.

14. *Ibid.*, Ch. 59.

idolatry.<sup>15</sup> Yet he also speaks favourably of Euphemerus and – most of all – of Plato and his apophatic account of the divine life.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Clement models the structure of his work on Plato. In his *Paedagogus*, he also draws heavily not only on Plato but also on Stoic (and perhaps Epicurean) thought, and regularly cites pagan literature, especially Homer.<sup>17</sup> Origen, who died of the wounds of persecution, draws from Clement to offer accounts of Christianity which speak into the philosophical context in which he lived. He also speaks of learning Hebrew and certain interpretations of the Old Testament from a Jewish teacher. His work also extends hope to those who do not know the proclaimed reality of Christ through his doctrine of *epinoiai*. He writes, for example: “We do not . . . all come to him [Christ] in the same way, but each one ‘according to his own proper ability.’”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Christ is “named in different ways for the capacity of those believing or the ability of those approving it.”<sup>19</sup> Within this ancient context of plurality, alongside intense teaching of the gospel and evangelism, was a respectful and contextual encounter of the gospel with the peoples with whom the Alexandrian fathers co-existed.

### **III. Christians and Religious Plurality to the 20th Century**

17. When Christianity moved into the post-Constantinian age and spread over the centuries into all parts of the world, Christians had much to negotiate to live in peace with non-Christian neighbours. In the east-

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15. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus (Exhortation to the Heathen)*, Ch. 1, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/020801.htm>

16. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/020806.htm>

17. Clement of Alexandria, *The Paedagogus*, Book 1, Ch. 1, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02091.htm>; Book 2, Ch. 1, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02092.htm>; Book 3, Ch. 1, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02093.htm>

18. Origen, *Homily 1(7)*, in *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 56.

19. *Ibid.*, *Homily 7(8)*, 312.

ern Mediterranean and Asia, Christians were generally minority religious communities, sometimes tolerated, sometimes threatened or persecuted. In Western Europe, Christians came to wield enormous political and economic power. A document of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism summarizes the relationship of Christianity and other religions during this long and complex history:

Christianity . . . has been, on the one hand, a force that brought the message of God's unconditional love for and acceptance of all people. On the other hand, its history, sadly, is also marked by persecutions, crusades, insensitivity to indigenous cultures, and complicity with imperial and colonial designs.<sup>20</sup>

18. While Eastern Christians often had to practice their faith within Muslim states, at times suffering oppression and persecution, it should also be noted that some Western Christians took up arms “for Christ.” Famously, during the first half of the second millennium, crusaders killed Muslims, and also Eastern Christians, Jews, and even “heretic” European Christians. The religious upheavals of the 16th century in Europe turned Western Christianity inwards, as disputing factions fought over the nature of the Church and its faithful proclamation of the gospel, resulting in the wars of religion, which were only relieved after decades of strife by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Non-Christians in Europe meanwhile experienced their own challenges in a culture that demanded religious uniformity. Expulsions of Jews increased from 1492 onwards, driving them from their home countries. Nor can we forget that, during the massive European colonial expan-

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20. “Religious plurality and Christian self-understanding,” 15 May 2005, CWME conference preparatory paper No. 13, §4, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-meetings/mission-and-evangelism/preparatory-paper-13-religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding>. See also *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §6.



sion which began in the 16th century, indigenous persons and persons who were enslaved were considered subhuman and therefore unworthy of the gospel. That Christian churches have renounced such actions is something for which we give thanks.

19. Within this ambiguity, there were Christians who deliberately sought interreligious peace. Jesuits in China did not condemn Confucianism but used it to help connect Christianity with Chinese culture. Some European Christians who became prominent theologians and church leaders navigated their multiple religious identities in ways that led to some of the most powerful theology in the history of the church. For example, Teresa of Avila was a notable theologian and mystic whose grandfather had been Jewish. In so doing they may have brought the spiritual and intellectual gifts inherited from their forebears into the heart of Christian life.<sup>21</sup>

20. Furthermore, some examples of generous and loving engagements within a context of plurality can be found in Arabic Christian dialogue with Islam. In their theological writings, Arabic Christians shaped Christian Arabic theology in the 9th century. Figures such as Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harran in Mesopotamia (d. c. 830); the Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah (d. c. 830); Patriarch Timothy I (d. 823); and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (9th century) offer us examples of serious Christian engagement with the teaching of Islam and with the Quran. Theodore Abū Qurrah speaks about the Muslims as the “people of the faith.”<sup>22</sup> He tried, with a deep knowledge of the Quran, to express a Christian

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21. For Teresa of Avila's Jewish heritage, see, for example, *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila: Volume One*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1976), 1.

22. See Vasile Octavian Mihoc, *Christliche Bilderverehrung im Kontext islamischer Bilderlosigkeit. Der Traktat über die Bilderverehrung von Theodor Abū Qurrah (ca. 755 bis ca. 830)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 129–133.

perspective within a scriptural frame of reference and within the context of a creative coexistence of the two religious communities. Theodore discusses passages from the Old Testament that have one or more quranic parallels. In doing so, he is less concerned with discussing divisive religious truths than with making clear that the act of faith already provides a clear distinction between those who let their views be guided by something higher than themselves (faith in the divine) and those who use their knowledge from reason alone. For him, faith became a prerequisite in the dialogue between Christians and Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

21. There has also been, throughout the history of the churches, the prophetic witness of those who have called for peace. These include, for example, the historic “peace churches,” such as the Mennonites, the Society of Friends (Quakers), and the Church of the Brethren. These churches practised “non-resistance” from their founding, refusing to take up arms, in part as an aspect of their nonconformity to the world. By the mid-20th century, the historic peace churches had come to understand pacifism as a witness of active nonviolence that acknowledges the need to confront evil in the search for peace with justice.

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23. See Sidney Harrison Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Hants: Aldershot, 2002); Jan Jacob Van Ginkel et al. (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven, 2005); Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Christian Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period (750–1258)* (Leiden, 1994); John C. Lamoreaux, “Theodore Abū Qurrah,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, vol. 1 (600–900)*, eds. D. Thomas et al. (Leiden-Boston, 2009), 439–491; Sandra Toenies Keating, “Abū Rā’itah l-Takrītī,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, vol. 1 (600–900)*, 567–581; Sandra Toenies Keating, *Dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the Early 9th Century: The Example of Habīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā’itah al-Takrītī’s Theology of the Trinity* (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2001). Mark Beaumont, “‘Ammār al-Baṣṣī,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, vol. 1 (600–900)*, 604–609. For Theodore Abū Qurrah, see Vasile Octavian Mihoc, “Der Schriftgebrauch im christlich-islamischen Kontext. Ein Beispiel der Intertextualität bei Theodor Abū Qurrah,” in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 65 (1–2), 1–20.

22. As the ecumenical movement itself took shape in the early 20th century, the call to consider these issues once again came to the fore. Christians who lived as religious minorities still needed to challenge the western churches to recognize and embrace the participation of all Christians across the globe. They were marginalized within the early ecumenical movement even as they continued to be marginalized as Christians in their own contexts of plurality and colonialization. The first Christians who pressed for consideration of interreligious dialogue in the ecumenical movement were those who were themselves in a context of being a minority as Christians, such as V. S. Azariah, the only Indian delegate to the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh.<sup>24</sup> The issue of Christianity within a context of religious plurality was not considered central to the concerns of the early ecumenical movement. This same conference, while focused on Christian evangelism, did consider the importance of the mission encounter with other religions, suggesting that it called for “fundamental shifts in Christian self-understanding and theology.”<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the issue was under-developed until the latter half of the 20th century.

23. By the end of the 20th century, the call for dialogue and peace among religions was firmly fixed in the agenda of the global ecumenical movement. In a changed geo-political setting, Christians in an ecumenical context found themselves thinking once more about religious

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24. V.S. Azariah memorably captured this sentiment when he pleaded for “a real willingness on the part of the foreign missionary to show that he is in the midst of the people to be to them not a lord and master but a brother and a friend. . . . We ask for love. Give us friends.” John Malhotra, “Bishop VS Azariah’s Appeal for Friends Still Relevant,” in *Christianity Today*, 2 June 2010, <http://www.christiantoday.co.in/article/bishop.vs.azariahs.appeal.for.friends.still.relevant/5407.htm>

25. S. Wesley Ariarajah, “Dialogue: Interfaith,” 1 September 2002, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-dictionary-interfaith-dialogue>

plurality in the company of others throughout the history of Christianity and Christian theology.<sup>26</sup>

#### **IV. Modern Theological Perspectives**

24. During the late 20th century, the religious landscape and the situation of religious plurality radically changed. The changing situation is related to multilayered factors, including economic and social globalization, the advance of science and technology, and changing demographics introduced by migration and refugees. The geographical isolation of Christians from the people of other religious traditions is no longer possible. They confront one another and influence each other's daily lives. The changing context of religious plurality has led to increasing interreligious tensions. Violence continues to be carried out in the name of religion and against religious people throughout the globe. The fact of terrorism makes the matter of thinking about religious plurality pressing for the whole Church. We live in an age where there is increased suffering as the result of religious teachings being weaponized in all kinds

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26. Some of the important documents published by the WCC in this area in the last quarter of the 20th century include: "Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies," (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1979 and 2010); Stanley J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Relationships* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981); *My Neighbour's Faith and Mine: Theological Discoveries Through Interfaith Dialogue* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986); "Baar Statement: Theological Perspectives on Plurality" (Barr, Switzerland, 9-15 January 1990) (preparatory document for the Canberra Assembly); S Wesley Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbour: Issues in Interfaith Relations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999); "Striving Together in Dialogue: A Muslim-Christian Call to Reflection and Action" (published by the WCC and other partners, following a Muslim-Christian meeting held in Amersfoort, Netherlands, in November 2000). *Current Dialogue*, the journal of the WCC focusing on interreligious relations, has been published since the winter of 1980-81. It contains important documents and articles tracing the development and emphases of the WCC's work in the area of interfaith relations.

of ways and contexts. The need for action in the contexts in which we find ourselves is crucial for the Christian churches. The Fifth European Catholic-Orthodox Forum noted, for example:

Terrorist violence against people considered “unbelievers” or “infidels” is the extreme degree of religious intolerance. We unreservedly condemn it. We deplore the fact that such acts have developed in the soil of a misguided religious culture, where the other is presented as hated by God himself and condemned to annihilation on account of this.<sup>27</sup>

25. So that we might resource theologically the work in which Christians are involved for peace between religions, the need to consider the matter of religious pluralism in light of the tradition and teachings of the Church has become ever more pressing. We live in a world in which many people claim that their understandings of God demand violent action. According to Christian teaching, in contrast to any false understandings, “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16). Learning what this means in our current context is a central concern for the churches as we seek to overcome misguided and false understandings of God that both legitimize and lead to religious violence. Facing global religious plurality and its increasing tensions challenges Christians to reaffirm our core understanding of the revelation of the nature of the divine life, God the eternal Holy Trinity. We must seek new and adequate ways of understanding, relating to, and living with the people of other religious traditions in the contexts of violence. We must learn ever-again as Christians the words of our Saviour and God: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

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27. *Message of the 5th European Catholic-Orthodox Forum*, 9-12 January 2017, [https://www.patriarchate.org/-/menyma-e-phorum-romaiokatholikon-kai-orthodoxon-en-europei-parisi-gallia-9-12-ianouariou-2017?\\_101\\_instance\\_xpozhhz0zkie\\_language\\_id=en\\_us](https://www.patriarchate.org/-/menyma-e-phorum-romaiokatholikon-kai-orthodoxon-en-europei-parisi-gallia-9-12-ianouariou-2017?_101_instance_xpozhhz0zkie_language_id=en_us)

26. The challenge of religious plurality also promises an opportunity for deepening Christian theology. The 20th century gave rise to significant theological reflection on what it means to say that salvation takes place uniquely in and through Jesus Christ, but also simultaneously that no human being has an overview of the saving grace of God and that the deposit of faith includes traditions with which to think positively about our relationship with the religious other. Several theologians, not least through drawing on the Patristic tradition, have considered what it might mean to think about the issue of religious plurality theologically. For some, the presence of the Logos in all creation (echoing Justin Martyr) provides means to reconsider mission and dialogue, looking to the commonality that might exist between Christians and others. Just as St Paul in his sermon at the Areopagus (Acts 17) found a point of contact with those to whom he preached in relation to the altar “to an unknown god” (Acts 17:23), some have used specific religious contexts as a means of finding points of contact for the expression of the gospel to those of other faiths.<sup>28</sup> For others, just as the fathers learned from Plato and other

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28. One might see Vatican II’s “*Nostra Aetate*” §1, in this vein:

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.

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 is 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?

philosophers and expressed their faith in their contexts of pluralism, the contemporary context of plurality provides an opportunity to consider what such an approach might mean for us in relation to members of other faiths in our own settings. These theologians have asked what we might be able to learn about how better to express our faith in light of the religious other, and how we might encounter these others in dialogue, listening as well as proclaiming. How might listening to the religious other help us better to proclaim the gospel? What aspects of our own faith might be highlighted and deepened through engagement with these others? Other theologians have sought to emphasize the inclusivity of the Logos, through whom all things were made and without whom nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3), and have pointed to the so-called “holy strangers” who exist in scripture as a basis for positive engagements with those of other religions. We are challenged to consider what it means to identify such virtues as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in members of other religions.

27. However, when we consider the differing complexities of religious plurality (such as Christians living as a religious minority, as representing one significant religion among others, or composing a majority religion), we recognize that there also cannot be a single neutral standard way to regard people of other religious traditions. Christians across the globe live on a continuum from persecution to harmony. Thus, the churches’ approach to other religions must be a multilevel, multi-contextual, and multidimensional. This involves the whole church listening together to the word of God through the Holy Spirit in the situations, sufferings, and lives of the entire body of Christ, giving special honour to those in contexts of oppression for the faith. In valuing particularly these voices, we affirm our unity across our differences in the lives of the churches.

28. The fact that most Christians now live in a context of religious plurality is not a problem to be explained or dissolved. It is rather a reality,

one that often brings with it an awareness of the violence that frequently accompanies such plurality, but that also promises a hopeful opportunity for witnessing to the gospel. Christians still have various positions on the issue of religious plurality. Recognizing the tensions among Christians on this issue, the global ecumenical movement has addressed religious plurality with a new awareness and sensitivity to mutual respect and openness. Some of these achievements include: The San Antonio report (1989); “The Baar Statement: Theological Perspectives on Plurality” (1990); “Religious Plurality and Christians Self-Understanding,” CWME conference preparatory paper no 13 (2005); and “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,” produced by the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance (2011).

29. The theological understanding of religious plurality is based on our faith in the triune God. The salvation of all human beings belongs to God. God created all things and is present in and with all creation from the beginning. The Father creates and providentially guides the creation, desiring to bring us to salvation and sending the Son and the Spirit for our reconciliation and redemption. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom the world is created and who will deliver the creation to the Father. The Holy Spirit, who is the Giver of Life and enlivens the Church, cares continuously for all as the creation is brought to redemption. The Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (John 3:8).<sup>29</sup> While Christians cannot point to any way of salvation other than Jesus Christ, at the same time, we, in humility, recognize that human beings cannot set limits on the saving

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29. In all accounts of the economy of the divine life, there is recognition of the theological principle of *opera omnia trinitatis ad externa indivisa sunt*, and within the context of the doctrine of appropriations, while recognizing the principle of the activity of the one God in all of the economic works of the persons of the Holy Trinity, it also recognizes that, following Nicea-Constantinople, we might appropriate certain activities of the history of salvation predominantly to particular persons of the triune life.



power of God because salvation belongs to the triune God alone.<sup>30</sup> The whole creation is included in the divine light of the pre-incarnate Logos. Thus, the grace of the triune God fills the whole creation,<sup>31</sup> and we live in the hope of the eschatological vision which St Paul offers: “When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

## **V. Living the Gospel: Kerygma, Diakonia, Martyria, Leitourgia**

30. In our pilgrimage toward justice and peace, we are part of the Church’s proclamation of the gospel. The Faith and Order convergence text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* states:

One challenge for the Church has been how to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in a way that awakens a response in the different contexts, languages and cultures of the people who hear that proclamation. . . . Over the centuries, Christians have witnessed to the Gospel within ever increasing horizons, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Often their witness to Jesus resulted in martyrdom, but it also led to the spread of the faith and to the establishment of the Church in every corner of the earth.<sup>32</sup>

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30. *The San Antonio Report: Your Will be Done, Mission in Christ’s Way*, ed. Frederick R. Wilson (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), Reports on Sections, Section 1: “Turning to Living God,” 32, §26.

See also “Religious plurality and Christian self-understanding,” 14 February 2006, World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding>

31. See, for example, “Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation,” Paper approved by Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches, 19 June 2019, §22.

32. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, §6.

31. On our journey, we acknowledge four dimensions of the Gospel: *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *martyria*, and *leitourgia*. Proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma*), exercising the ministry of Christian service (*diakonia*), giving witness to Christ (*martyria*), and participating in the worshipping life (*leitourgia*), constitute the Church in its communion (*koinonia*) with God, with people, and with creation as a whole.<sup>33</sup> These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. Although inseparable, throughout the history of the Church and around the world, one or the other of these four dimensions has often predominated in Christian practice. Diverse global contexts of interreligious plurality invite Christians to consider which dimension or dimensions assist us in understanding the proclamation of the good news. In faithfully proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in a given setting, each dimension helps us to highlight and emphasize the different ways in which we can share the gospel, attending to the varying realities of interreligious plurality in which the faith is proclaimed. As we look at each of these in turn, and realize the unique gift and joy each brings to the proclaiming Jesus Christ, we also recognize their inseparable and interrelational dynamics.

32. In the New Testament, *kerygma* is the word used for preaching (see, for example, Luke 4:18-19; Rom. 10:14; Matt. 3:1). The apostolic proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ is one of the marks of the Church acknowledged by all churches. Journeying together toward justice and peace, we want to tell the world of the salvation achieved through Christ in the power of the Spirit, as well as offer to others the possibility of salvation through present encounter with Christ in the Spirit (Acts 4:20). Pope John Paul II has stated:

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33. See CWME, "Preparatory Paper No. 1: Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today" (WCC, 2005), 7 (a). On the topic of *koinonia*, see also Aram Keshishian, "Growing Together Towards a Full Koinonia," in *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement 1902-1992*, comp. Gennadios Limouris (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994): 235-247.

The Church knows that the communion received by her as a gift is destined for all people. Thus the Church feels she owes to each individual and to humanity as a whole the gift received from the Holy Spirit that pours the charity of Jesus Christ into the hearts of believers, as a mystical force for internal cohesion and external growth.<sup>34</sup>

33. Not all Christians have the freedom to preach the *kerygma* overtly in their contexts because of persecution, oppression, lack of acceptance, or external cultural forces. However, even in such contexts, Christians faithfully live their lives, bringing the message of Christ's peace and salvation. The term *diakonia* (from the Greek verb *diakonein*, to serve) helps us in this regard. It refers to service as a permanent activity of the Church throughout its history. To serve is at the very heart of Christian life and reflects the spirit and teaching of Jesus (Luke 22:24-27). For the Church, charity and the empowerment of the marginalized and voiceless is not a kind of welfare activity that could equally well be left to others, but is part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being. *Diakonia* is also informed by the parable of the last judgement (Matt. 25: 31-46) in which Jesus tells us that he is present in the most unexpected of strangers: through *diakonia* we participate in God's salvific work. On our pilgrimage, God calls us to serve not only those who are Christians; God calls us to serve *because* we are Christians.

34. Through St Stephen, the first martyr, we learn what constitutes *martyria*. He suffers in the name of the faith; he overcomes the fear of death through hope in Christ; he envisions the kingdom; and he prays for the forgiveness of those who harm him. Clement understands the martyrdom as the physical, visible expression of the believer's love of

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34. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici: On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 1988, §32, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html)

God.<sup>35</sup> There is no martyrdom without love. *Martyria* must always be a manifestation of love in overcoming our fear or our hostility toward the other, since God's perfect love casts out all fear (1 Jn. 4:18). In some parts of the world, *martyria* still means risking one's life. On our journey, Christians suffer with other Christians who are victims of persecution, recognizing each one as part of our own body within the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-18).

35. For many, the fact that the Church has survived despite intense persecution serves to prove that Christian faith has divine origin, and also that God is sovereign. As St John Chrysostom stated: "This proves that the Christian faith is not of man, that the truth of the Christian teaching has its roots in Heaven, and that God is the one who always governs His churches."<sup>36</sup> The struggle of persecution is not just a worldly one, but one in which the spiritual nature of the struggle is fully evident. Faithful continuation in light of persecution is a witness to the character of Christianity and the sovereign grace of God. God calls Christians throughout the world to pray and intercede for those who are persecuted in contexts of plurality for the sake of the faith; and to do all we can in advocacy for and care of our sisters and brothers in Christ who suffer persecution. *Martyria*, because it means "witness," also captures the way in which Christians joyfully proclaim the peace of the gospel courageously even in contexts of violence, oppression, fear of losing privileges, or indifference in relation to the Christian church. However, the whole church is called faithfully to witness to Christ as we live the joyful good news of the gospel in a context of plurality. The martyrs of the Church, past and present, remind the whole Church of this call to witness, and challenge all Christians to live the gospel more faithfully.

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35. Clement of Alexandria, *Les Stromates: Stromate IV*, ed. Annewies van den Hoek, trans. Claude Mondésert (Sources Chrétiennes 463, Paris 2001), 19, 118, 252. English translation at <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02104.htm>

36. St John Chrysostom, in S. Ignatium Martyrem, *Patrologia Graeca* 50:594.

36. *Leitourgia* literally means “the work of the people.” As such, it is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed. It is also the fount from which all her power flows. Through its liturgical life, the Church is drawn into the God-given gift of communion with Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and humanity, the means of our salvation.<sup>37</sup> The first letter of John points to the blessed end toward which the entire mission of the Church is directed: “What we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). God calls all Christians to feed their lives in worship to fulfil their vocation to be the people of God. We live our lives in a world of religious plurality as people who are called faithfully to pray, worship the triune God, and hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christians live and work within a religiously plural world, encountering the other in love without fear (as instructed in 1 John 4:18) within this encompassing reality of God’s glorification. The liturgy is the joyful celebration of life experienced in Christ and His Body. In the liturgy, the communitarian and cosmic dimensions of salvation are experienced and manifested. The salvation that the community experiences has to be extended outside the walls of the church, often called “the liturgy after the Liturgy.”<sup>38</sup> We go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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37. “While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within it into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.” Pope Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 4 December 1963, §2, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)

38. See Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications), 1996.

## **VI. Implications for the Search for Unity**

37. At Pentecost, people from across the world heard the gospel proclaimed in their own languages. The Holy Spirit freed these people to hear the gospel in their own contexts and across differences. Without undermining or removing these particularities, Christians who came to faith from so many nations across the globe are presented as living together in their differences in unity and holding all things in common (Acts 2). In our own different globalized contexts, we, too, are called to visible unity in our concrete and distinctive identities. We are sent together as Christians into a life together in the world with all its complex religious plurality.

38. When we show our Christian solidarity with one another in this religiously plural world, especially with those who find themselves in situations of discrimination, marginalization, being part of diaspora communities, or being oppressed, we express our call to walk together in visible unity. In our globalized societies, those suffering for the faith challenge those in whose situations Christianity is a cultural norm, blessing us with a reminder of God's call upon all Christians to witness to the love and peace of Jesus Christ. Those whose witness involves martyrdom in the narrower sense instill in the whole Church a powerful yearning for deep witness to the gospel in every aspect of church lives.

39. What, then, does visible unity mean in a context of religious plurality, and what specific issues does religious plurality highlight?

- i. Our co-suffering as Christians in the one body of Christ with those who suffer affirms our sense of being one body. Those parts of the body of Christ that suffer oppression often find themselves in situations of isolation in their minority or persecuted contexts. The intercessions and advocacy of the whole Church for them is a key expression of the unity of the Church, and the significance and

importance of their voice deserves special honour within the body of our Saviour (1 Cor. 12:22-26).

ii. Our visible unity with Christians across the globe who live in different situations of religious plurality is emphasized by addressing these issues. Furthermore, those who are marginalized for their faith or find themselves in situations of persecution provide a prophetic conviction to those who live in contexts of comfort and cultural Christianity.

iii. As the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are all called to the task of witnessing to Him in the religiously pluralistic world in which we live. This unity of witness is enhanced through visible unity with one another. As Jesus teaches us: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

iv. In our pilgrimage of faith, we are called to live in humility and peace with fellow humans across our differences. In this journey, we share Christ’s compassion, hospitality, fellowship, and solidarity. Engaging with people of other religious traditions in mutual respect and love is one way to follow the unconditional grace of the triune God. The pilgrimage of our faith involves living together in our globalized localities with people of the other religious traditions. We are called to live the gospel, promote peace, and live the life abundant for the whole creation.

v. Christ’s gift of peace that is given to the apostles reminds all Christians that we are sent with the peace of Christ into the very world which had crucified him and which goes on to persecute his disciples. Christ’s kingdom is not one brought about by the sword of Simon Peter (John 18:10), but by the giving of Christ’s *shalom* in his resurrected life. We are called prophetically as Christians to live this reality in a world of violence.

vi. As those who follow Christ, we are called to be united in opposing any violence carried out in the name of religion. All Christians have a

personal responsibility to be opposed to violence and discrimination carried out against religions or supposedly on account of religion,<sup>39</sup> and we can be united in such a calling.

vii. In discovering the peace of Christ in one another, we are further deepened in our Christian unity as we walk together in the pilgrimage of faith. We are challenged to ask ourselves: How can we live in peace with members of other religions when we fail to live in peace within ourselves and with one another?

40. However, how can we live and proclaim peace when we are still divided, having not yet achieved full visible unity? As Christians in a world of those of other religions and none, we need to live our life as a visibly united church since our Christian particularity rests in being the body of Christ. Our witness is diminished by our divisions. The imperative to full visible unity is made all the more urgent, therefore, in light of our call to witness. If we are known to be Christians through our Christlike love, we fail to witness with power to those who are not Christians when we are divided from each other. Living the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in a complexly pluralist society is thus itself a challenge to us to rethink the unity of the Church. To proclaim and live the gospel in this context both highlights what we have in common as those who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and calls to mind our failure yet to achieve visible eucharistic communion.

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39. See also Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 28 October 1965, §5: “The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to ‘maintain good fellowship among the nations’ (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men, so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.”

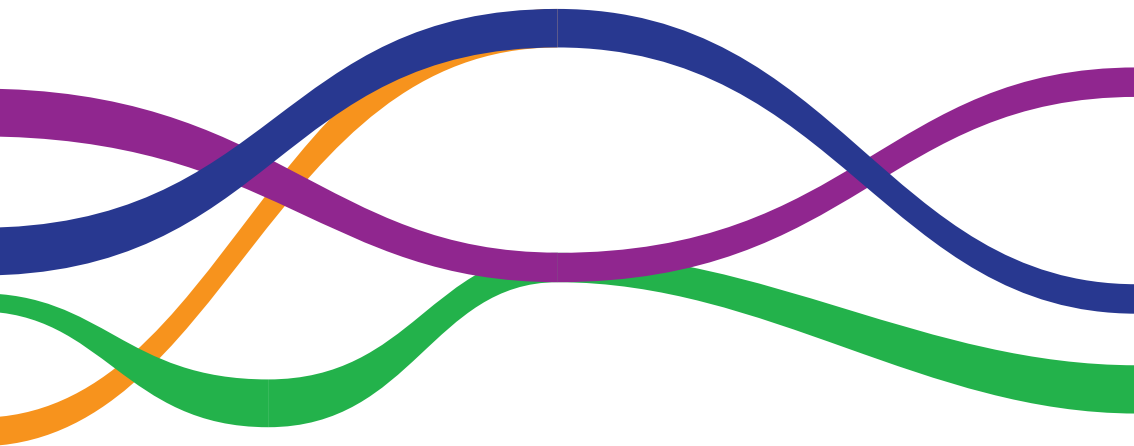


41. Furthermore, even in the formulation of discussion topics relating to religious plurality, voices of power and privilege often dominate. This can repeat structures of oppression within the internal dynamics of churches. Such discussions can be shaped in ways that continue to marginalize the voices of Christians in minorities, even while acknowledging and seeking to listen to those in marginalized contexts. All too often we fall prey to thinking in terms of majority or minority voices within Christianity in a manner that breaks apart the body of Christ. We need to listen to the word of God together; we need to hear the experiences of the whole Church, including the marginalized, oppressed, and persecuted. Their voices need to be as central in these discussions as those who benefit from the toleration or privileging of Christianity. Indeed, as present-day martyrs in whatever form, their voices are all the more central to the life of the Church as those who, in the image from Revelation, dwell under the altar of God (Rev. 6:9). In seeking unity, we are to be a light to the people (Is. 42:1-12), calling forth a prophetic longing for the visible unity of all Christians, from all contexts, for the sake of the gospel and the life and joy it brings.

42. The peace we live and proclaim is the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ. As he says in John's gospel: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:27). To bring this peace to the world, we need to be at peace with each other as Christians. It is with this peace that we are sent into the world prophetically to live alongside people of religious difference as the body of Christ within and for the world, sharing in the world's sufferings, violence, and pain; seeking to embody and live the reconciliation and peace Christ brings. We must call upon the Holy Spirit who brings us peace (Gal. 5:22) to make us one. The Holy Spirit forms us into the body of Christ. As the Letter to the Ephesians states: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

43. When inviting others to come and *see*, the *visible* unity of the church is pivotal. In order to witness to God's mission, we must love each other as sisters and brothers, drawn together by the same Shepherd, whose voice we as Christians recognize and follow with joy to the Father's house, in which there are many rooms (John 14:2).





## World Council of Churches

Postal address:  
P.O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

Tel: (+41 22) 791 6111  
Fax: (+41 22) 791 0361

[www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)

Visiting address:  
150 Route de Ferney  
Grand-Saconnex (Geneva)  
Switzerland

Religion

