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Summary:

Interiorism means that Christ, in a hidden way, is already present in all real religions; thus interiorism is an alternative to exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Instead of pretending to be superior to other religions christianism can render them a service.

Peter Knauer SJ, Frankfurt/Main

The Christian message and other religions or: Christ in the religions

How does the Christian faith relate to other religions? Historically there are three main models: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

Exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism

Exclusivism is based on the idea that the Christian message is the true religion. It seems to follow that all other religions are false. This consequence is especially easy to draw if one is not really acquainted with other religions. It is very easy then to condemn them. Exclusivism can be expressed by the formula: "Christ against the religions". This formula excludes a friendly relation of Christian faith to other religions.

But if one knows pious and affectionate adherents of other religions, such a condemnation becomes less easy. If nevertheless one wants to continue to affirm that one's own religion is the true one, then inclusivism seems to be a solution: Also

the others have at least parts of the truth. But only the Christian faith is the full truth. A formula for such inclusivism would be: "Christ above the religions". Against inclusivism on the one hand is that the claim of superiority of Christianity would still be resented by others as a sort of disrespect. On the other hand: to acknowledge "elements" of the truth of Christianity in other religions would be experienced by these rather as a sort of an illegitimate colonisation.

In the last decades a further model has developed, that of pluralism. It assumes that all the different religions adore in different ways the same reality. God is reflected in religions as in a sort of kaleidoscope. No religion can raise an absolute claim, or if so, this claim remains limited to the adherents of the respective religion. The formula for this determination of how Christianity relates to other religions would be: "Christ beside the religions". For Christians, Christ would then be the human being that was most pleasing to God, and for other religions this could be for example Buddha or Mohammed. It would then seem however, that the Christian confession of Jesus as the Son of God would be either: only a type of flowery speech, or one should assume many incarnations of the divine also outside of Christianity.

If Christians had to select between these different models, then inclusivism would appear to be the most attractive alternative. It avoids both the hardness of exclusivism and also the relativizing and leveling of one's own claim, which would be implied in pluralism. One might have the impression that the magisterium of the Catholic church identifies itself at present simply with inclusivism. Although it recognises "elements" of the truth also in other religions, it considers these religions altogether as existing "in a gravely deficient situation"¹.

There are theologians who try to prove by analysis of language, that there cannot be further possibilities of a relation of the Christian faith to other religions than just these three: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. They explain it for example this way: "A cognition of God which might mediate salvation" is in the

1 Cf. e.g. the assertion of the declaration "*Dominus Iesus*" by the congregation of faith from 6 August 2000 "over the uniqueness and universal importance for salvation of Jesus Christ and the church", n. 22: "If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation." The document quotes: Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici corporis*: DS 3821.

religions "either given or not given. If it is given, then either only once or several times. If it is several times given, then either only once in a maximum form or several times."² If this maximum form is given several times, then pluralism would be appropriate according to this view.

But in such an aprioristic deduction one limits oneself to a framework and presupposes that there can be only the possibilities, which can be considered within this framework. One presupposes that the term "cognition of God which might mediate salvation" can be formulated without any problem and that it is then only to be asked, whether such cognition of God is real and how often we meet it. One does not consider the possibility that just this framework is to be questioned. But exactly this occurs in the Christian message, as will be demonstrated in the following. The term "cognition of God which might mediate salvation" is everything but a self-evident natural possibility.

A common problem for all religions

In the following we shall consider only real religions and not pseudoreligions. True religion differs from pseudoreligion by the fact that it is revering an ultimate and unsurpassable reality. "Unsurpassableness" is the criterion for each real religion. Pseudoreligion on the contrary would mean revering something that can be surpassed; it would consist in deifying something created; its turning over to despair is thereby already pre-programmed. For example the Roman emperor cult or in our time national socialism or the Scientology sect are pseudoreligious. If all true religion consists in revering an unsurpassable reality, by referring to what is unsurpassable, it gains itself an unsurpassable character. What is unsurpassable, cannot be substituted by something else. In all real religions we are dealing with our final and unsurpassable being sheltered. Even, as in Buddhism, where there is no explicit speaking of "God", the deepest goal of humans is nevertheless to enter into Nirvana, which means a nameless blessedness, exceeding all our understanding³. It means to be saved from any threat. Would one not have to say

2 PERRY SCHMIDT LEUKEL, Grundkurs Fundamentaltheologie – Eine Einführung in die Grundfragen des christlichen Glaubens, München 1999, 187.

3 HAJIME NAKAMURA, Die Grundlehren des Buddhismus – Ihre Wurzeln in Geschichte und Tradition, in: Buddhismus der Gegenwart, hrsg. von HEINRICH DUMOULIN, Freiburg 1970, 190: "Many poetic expressions describe the status of humans, who achieved the perfect final goal. Different aspects of the versatile expression Nirvana are shown by the manifold names such as port of the refuge,

that also here nothing still larger can be thought, as says an ancient definition of God?⁴

However, a blessedness exceeding all our understanding is not a sort of common header for all religions, which one could construct in logical calculations. This would contradict the incomprehensibility of the divine which is affirmed in all religions. Rather, the question arises for all religions, how humans can really think that they are connected to this last reality and thus be saved.

Only at first sight, and in a very superficial view, is this a false question. Then one says that God or the ultimate is almighty and can therefore also manifest itself to its creatures. Is it not common to all religions to think the divine capable of manifesting itself to the world and to act upon it? But here one has already lost sight of the fact that the reality adored in the religions is not only such that nothing still greater can be thought, but that it is greater than everything that we can think at all. Both the Jewish religion, Christianity and Islam, when they wish to speak about God, can only say about the world, that it is created "out of nothing". If one interprets this proposition radically - and only thus can it be really understood - then it means: In all that our world differs from nothing, thus in each regard, in which it is at all, it cannot exist without a term we are calling "God". This is an unsurpassable, not increasable dependency. If the world is created exactly in the measure, in which it is, then its being created can be read in it and must be accessible to reason and even in the proper sense be demonstrable. It is not God that is proven, but our own being created. Actually one can offer such a proof. Everything in the world represents a unity of contrasts at the same time. For example, movement, to which everything is subject in our world, is an unsolvable

cool cave, island in the midst of the tides, lucky place, emancipation, release, security, the highest, the transcendental, the uncreated, silence, home of well-being, peace, end of suffering, cure of all evils, the unshakable, Ambrosia, the immortal, the immaterial, the imperishable, the ever-lasting, the other coast, the never ending, blessedness in the effort, the highest joy, the inexpressible, the redemption, the holy city among and so on [...]. In contrast to the view dominant in the west of Nirvana, Buddhism expressly rejects the demand for extinction in the sense of annihilation or non-existence."

- 4 Cf. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109): For him God is "something, beyond which nothing greater can be thought [*aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit*]" (Proslogion 2 [I, 101, 5]); this means that God and world together cannot be more than God alone; so the world is in itself nothing other than relation to God. Anselm even formulates in a prayer: "Lord, you are thus not only that, above which nothing greater can be thought, but you are something greater, than to be thought [*Ergo Domine, non solum es id quo maius cogitari nequit, sed quiddam maius quam cogitari possit*]."

unity at the same time of continuing identity and upcoming non-identity. This can only be described differently from a logical contradiction if it is possible to indicate two different regards, which do not again exclude each other. Such respects we can find only in the term "complete referring to ... / in complete difference from ...".

So one does not know first, who God is, and says only then that he has created the world. Rather, the world is the starting point of this speech of God, and we cannot leave this starting point behind ourselves. Everything in the world is understood as "completely referring to ... / in complete difference from ...". With "completely" is meant the respective concrete reality. And the term of this "complete referring to ..." can only be enunciated by saying that the world cannot exist without it. God is to be defined as "without whom nothing can exist". This is the only way to maintain that God does not fall under our concepts; what we conceive of God, is only what is different from God just by totally referring to God. The only way to speak in a meaningful way of God consists in thus recognizing our being created out of nothing. And because being created out of nothing embraces the entire world, God is one and the same for the whole world.

"Being created out of nothing" does not only mean the beginning of the world, as if before creation nothing would have existed. Rather it means that we presently and in all times exist in a complete relationship. If we were able to eliminate our being created out of nothing, then simply nothing would remain of us. Being created is therefore no additional characteristic of the world, but is perfectly identical with its entire being.

The traditional speaking of "being created out of nothing" needs to be understood in a "relational ontology" which might perhaps appear quite unusual. We are used to regarding substance as the fundamental category of being and to think about relation only as secondary. But "being created out of nothing" means that there is a relation, which is constitutive of the substance itself, of all what exists. The reality of the world exists only as: "complete reference to ... / in complete difference from ...". The world is therefore in itself a subsistent relation.

(*Proslogion* 15 [1, 112, 14]).

But then the world cannot be, beyond that, also the constitutive term of a relation from God to it. To imagine that the world can be the constitutive term of a divine relation to it would simply mean to deny its being "created out of nothing". Rather, the relation which constitutes the world must be considered to be a completely unilateral relation.

This insight requires a sort of conversion affecting even our precomprehension. Our normal precomprehension consists in thinking absolutely everything as existing in interaction. There is a hardly surmountable inclination to draw God too into the world as the area of interactions. This way of thinking is something like the trace of hereditary sin in our thinking, because it would be a sort of "domination thinking". But in this way one would think of God as only a part of a more global total reality; this would be contradictory in itself.

Thomas Aquinas however had already taught: "Because God is outside of the entire order of the created reality, all creatures depend on him and not viceversa. Therefore, it is clear that all creatures refer really to God. But in God, there is no real relation to the creatures, but only a thought relation (*secundum rationem tantum*) in as much the creatures relate to him" (S. th. I q13 a7 c).

If we thus, from our "being created out of nothing", infer that "God has created us", which seems to imply a relation of God to the world, then Thomas Aquinas answers: In reality we only acknowledge the fact that the world is "completely referring to ... / in complete difference from ... ", and this is our only concept of God. Thomas states, that a relationship in the opposite direction exists only in our thinking. Its unique ground fundament is the one-sided relationship of all that is created to God. The relationship of God to us is a relation in our mind only and cannot add anything to the fact of the one-sided real relationship of the world to God.

At first sight it may seem that such a statement as the only one-sided real relationship of the world to God represents as it were only the halving of a mutual relationship existing in reality and thus is an illegitimate reduction. But this would only be a relapse into not-relational thinking. It misjudges the fact that the real relationship of the world to God is not added to the world. In reality it is a subsistent relation filled with the whole reality of the world itself. *Within* the

world all relations are added to their respective carrier. All relations within the world are mutual relations, so that one must even define the world as the area of interactions.

But the relation of the world to God cannot be thought according to the same model. To think this would paradoxically be the real reduction. Such reduction, very common even in Christian theology, has extremely dire consequences. It allows to arise the so-called problem of theodicy which cannot be solved. The problem of theodicy consists in considering God as almighty in the sense that he could do, whatever one could imagine. And his mercy would have to consist in the fact that we are protected from any evil. Then naturally omnipotence and mercy are not compatible together: Either God is almighty, but not merciful, because he does protect one from any evil. Or he is merciful, but then not almighty, because he obviously does not succeed in preventing any evil. These conceptions both of omnipotence and of mercy are from the beginning completely insufficient. The problem of theodicy cannot be answered, because it has contradictory prerequisites in itself. Instead of undertaking the unfit attempt to answer the problem theodicy the Christian message will rather ask for the role of faith for our dealing with the evils in the world.

In reality God's omnipotence does not mean that he could do whatever we can imagine (an only potential omnipotence) but that he is mighty in everything, which actually occurs. This predicate however for itself and alone does not yet mean a comfortable reality. Also the many terrible things, which occur in our world, are such that they would not exist without God. Also in them God is the powerful one. The understanding of the omnipotence of God becomes consoling only if we get to know that God who is mighty in whatever occurs, is the God that takes us up in his communion. For then no power of the world can win against this. God's mercy also does not consist in the fact that he warrants always our well-being. It means according to Rom 8:31-39 rather that no power of the world can be sufficient to separate us out from the communion with him. Not even death has yet this power. To know oneself in communion with God means therefore that we no more need to live dominated by our the anxiety for ourselves.

Perhaps also the religion of Hinduism can be summarized in the fact that one is delivered from the absolute power of fear for oneself.

Outside of the communion with God each misfortune in the world becomes a parable of a fundamental senselessness ("hell"); no good experience could afford against the fact that transitoriness and death have always the final say. But the reverse applies within the communion with God: each ever so small and passing good experience becomes the parable of our lasting communion with him, from whom no evil and no death would be able to separate us. And death would have lost its power to be the parable of eternal senselessness.

But just the latter, the communion with God, represents a problem, which exists for all religions. How can we speak of God's mercy for us humans in another way than saying that the absolute, eternal God is turned to us humans? But how is such speech compatible with understanding oneself as "created out of nothing"? If to be created out of nothing means that the world is simply identical with being a unilateral relation to God, how can one speak then beyond that of a real relation of God to the world? How can we speak of a communion with God, of our being sheltered in his love without contradicting thereby our being created out of nothing and the acknowledgement of the transcendence and absoluteness of God?

This question arises first of all within Christianity itself. For example Walter Kasper writes on the question how the divinity of God can be maintained when God becomes incarnate: "It is obvious that behind the constant, until today never quiescent dialectic movement in the entire history of dogma and theology between the emphasis on unity and the emphasis on distinction of divinity and humanity there is the unsettled and perhaps never to be really cleared up problem: the problem of mediating between God and human reality."⁵ If this diagnosis really applied, it would come down to a declaration of bankruptcy for all theology.

But also in Islam the question about the mediation between God and world arises. Already from early Islam, around the eighth century, it is reported that a certain Dja'd Ibn Dirham put the question, how can one maintain in view of the transcendence of Allah that he spoke to Abraham or Moses.⁶ The fact that Ibn

5 WALTER KASPER, *Jesus der Christus*, Mainz 1974, 283.

6 Cf. TILMAN NAGEL, *Geschichte der islamischen Theologie*, München 1994, 102; cf. also G. VAJDA,

Dirham was condemned and burnt because of such questioning the possibility of revelation, cannot make the problem disappear.⁷

In Christianity this question found its most vehement expression in the prerequisite for Luther's theology: "How can I obtain a benevolent God?" This question is understandable only if the world is as such a unilateral relation to God. For then no created quality can actually ever be sufficient to found a communion with God. Does not 1 Tim 6:16 say that God "alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see"? But how then communion with God is still possible? The separation of the Christians among themselves, which developed from this question of Luther, is a sign for the fact that also Christians often only pass on their own faith as if in a sealed envelope, without really understanding it. For all religions the question arises, how a communion with the eternal and absolute reality can be stated. How can we maintain the transcendency of the eternal and absolute one, and at the same time say that he is mercifully turned to us humans?

The answer of the Christian message

The Christian message gives an answer to the question, how one can speak of communion with God without contradicting his absoluteness and transcendence, and in this answer the deepest truth of all other religions is not surpassed, but comes completely to light.

In view of the unilateral nature of the real relation of the creation to God the Christian message makes understandable by its content, how one can nevertheless speak also of a relation of God to the world and speak of a communion of humans with God. The basic content of the Christian message is its trinitarian understanding of God, its appealing to the incarnation of the son and its understanding of the grace of faith as our being bestowed with the Holy Spirit.

Ibn Dirham, in: The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, Vo. III, Leiden-London 1986, 474.

7 And not that "a revealing of God by its word - supernatural revealing - and thus a meeting with humans, who were chosen to it, is thus [...] a common ideas of Christians and Muslims". This is the opinion of KARL H. SINGER, Die Begegnung Gottes mit dem Menschen im Koran – Dargestellt an der Sendung Moses zum Pharao, in: GÜNTER RIBE (Hg.), Zeitgeschichte und Begegnungen – Festschrift für Bernhard Neumann zur Vollendung des 70. Lebensjahres, Paderborn 1998, 200.

The Christian message speaks about Trinity in order to explain our communion with God as our being assumed into the eternal love between God and God, i.e. the Father and the Son. This love is in itself God, the Holy Spirit. God's love does not find its measure in something created, but can only be understood as eternal and absolute. The three divine persons are not three Gods, but three differently mediated relations of the one divine reality to itself. They are three autoprésences of the divine reality.

If God's love for the world does not have its measure in the world, then one cannot read it in the world. This applies in contrast to the being created of the world: everything is created in exactly the measure, in which it is. Therefore we said, that being created must be readable in the world. But God's grace does not have its measure in the world. It cannot be read in the world, but remains hidden as long as it is not announced by the word. It can become manifest in a universally proclamable way only through a human word that is added to the reality of the world.

For this, the Christian message appeals to the incarnation of the Son. The man Jesus is, in what constitutes his human basic autoprésence (which normally would constitute the human person), from his first moment of existing is taken up into the divine autoprésence of the eternal Son. The reality of God is connected with this human being through the second relation of divine autoprésence, which we call the Son. Because this latter is the all bearing autoprésence, it makes Jesus also in his human being a divine person.

So this human being can say in human word a truth which is divine: that we participate in his relation to the Father, which is a relationship of God to God, i.e. the Holy Spirit. This gift of the grace of God we humans cannot accept by means of our own efforts but only in virtue of our already being created "in Christ" from the beginning. So God's love doesn't become greater through its being revealed; it becomes only manifest in its insurpassableness from the outset. According to the Christian creed the entire world is already "created in Christ", i.e., created into the eternal love between the Father and the Son. This "original condition" of the world becomes manifest by the incarnation of the Son. Where someone knows

himself saved in God's love, he no more lives out of the fear for himself, but can live as loving and well-meaning.

For the Christian message true love and unselfishness among humans is not their own action, but the gift of God. The Christian message states that each true loving is experienced itself as a gift. One can only love if one knows himself loved. Therefore the gospel according to St. John says: "He who does truth, comes to the light, so that his works are made manifest that they are wrought in God." (John 3:21). Everyone who lives in a loving way does the truth. About him Jesus says: If he were to encounter the clear announcement of the Christian message, then in this light he would come to know with joy that he had always lived in the communion with God, which is announced in the Christian message. Thus the Christian message acknowledges in reality the deepest truth of all real religions and makes their basic faith universally proclaimable. How can one say, in view of the non-selfevidence of communion with God, together with all religions that we humans are saved? This requires in the final analysis a trinitarian, christological and pneumatological understanding of God. This understanding brings the truth of all real religions finally to light.

Interiorism

In the following is to be considered in addition to the three above mentioned ideas of: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, still another further possibility. It could be phrased as: "Christ in the religions"⁸, and as name for it I suggest "interiorism"⁹. Interiorism differs from inclusivism in that it does not claim a superiority, as if the Christian message would pretend to surpass other religions. It understands its function rather almost in reverse as a service to the unsurpassableness of all true religions which it recognizes as unsurpassable. It applies also here that Christ did not come, in order to prevail, but to serve (cf. Matth 20:28). From pluralism this idea would differ likewise by its service character for the other religions. Instead of trying to surpass and even to substitute other religions, the Christian message would contribute to bring the unsurpassable truth of all real religions definitely to the light.

Wherein could this service of the Christian faith for the unsurpassableness all true religion lie? This can first be explained by the model of the relation of the Christian message to the Jewish religion. Here we meet the most amazing phenomenon that the Christian faith takes over the entire holy text of the religion of Israel without any reductions. Before the emergence of the New Testament texts and later in the New Testament itself the holy Scripture of Israel is quoted as the absolute authority. If the New Testament speaks of "the scriptures" or of "Moses and all prophets and all writings", then it means the holy scriptures of the Jews. These scriptures are understood by the Christian message as now "fulfilled".

8 This formula is already in the text of the international Theological Commission of 30 September 1996: "Christianity and the religions", ed. by the Secretariat of the German bishop conference, Bonn 1996, n. 9: "In various ways people try to classify the different theological views of this problem. We look on some of these classifications: Christ against the religions, in the religions, over the religions, apart from the religions, ecclesiocentric universe or exclusive christology; christocentric universe or inclusive christology; theocentric universe with a normative christology; theocentric universe with a non-normative christology. Some theologians take over the three-way distinction exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism, which is seen parallel to the other distinction: ecclesiocentrism, christocentrism, theocentrism. Since we must select one of these systematizations, in order to continue our considerations, we decide for the latter, which we, if necessary, will complete with items of the other distinctions." The mentioned formulation "Christ in the religions" is however, in the document, not taken up again.

9 This terminoly may remember a formula of S. Augustine, according to which God is interior to the human person than its own most intimate: Augustinus Hipponensis, Confessionum libri tredecim, lib. 3, cap. 6, linea 5: *tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*. [CPL 0251 SL 27 (L. Verheijen, 1981)].

Far from wanting to replace the scriptures of Israel by the New Testament the latter understands itself as a source of light, in which the deepest meaning of the scripture of Israel comes fully to light. This meaning is not produced by the Christian message, but only launched. One could compare this with the phenomenon of fluorescence. There are grey minerals, which shine under the light of a certain wavelength as coloured from inside. This characteristic belongs to them from the beginning, but it manifests itself only under this source of light.

One could see the entire holy scripture of the Jews summarized in the covenant formula: "You are my people and I am your God."¹⁰ If God is the powerful one as the creator of the world in everything that exists, then nothing greater than communion with God can be stated. Also the Christian message cannot surpass the covenant formula. There is nothing higher than communion with God. However St. Paul says in 2 Cor 3:14: "For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ".¹¹ This means that there is a problem of understanding in relation to the scriptures of Israel, which is only removed by the Christian message. Only then the deepest meaning of the scriptures of Israel comes fully to the light. The Christian designation of the scriptures of Israel as Old Testament means a new and definite understanding of this text.

Christianity originally did not wish to substitute the Jewish religion. Rather the Jews who believed in Jesus Christ continued to adore in the Jewish temple (cf. Acts 3:1; 5:25.42; 21:26-30). For in their view the scriptures of Israel were already in a true sense God's word. For the Christians the scriptures of Israel were already a fully valid (and by no means an only deficient) testimony of their own faith. The johannine Christ says: "You investigate the scriptures, because you mean to have in them the eternal life; just they testify for me." (John 5:39). In a quite comparable way, Paul in Athens will, for his proclamation of the Father of Jesus Christ, have

10 Cf. Jer 11:4; cf. further Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1; 32:28; Eze 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23.27; Zec 8:8 and other texts.

11 The German "Einheitsübersetzung" of this text is false: "Up to today the same veil is situated upon the old covenant, when it is read and it remains hidden, that the latter takes an end in Christ." It is not the old covenant, which takes an end in Christ, but the veiling of it!

recourse to Greek poets: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." (Acts 17:28)

What results therefrom for the relation of the Christian faith to the other religions? It cannot be the sense of the Christianity to replace other religions. Just as there were in the first Christianity believers coming from Judaism who continued to visit the temple, the encounter with the Christian should not draw a buddhist out from his/her former religious culture. Because the four noble truths of Buddhism about suffering, the emergence of suffering, the removal of suffering and the way to this removal¹² remain perfectly true also for a person, who coming from Buddhism converts to the faith in Jesus Christ. The service of the Christian faith for these truths consists just in bringing their unsurpassableness and irreplaceability definitely to light.

And how can the Christian faith be announced in the entire world if not under the presupposition that everything is already created "in Christ"? According to the Christian doctrine of grace, nobody can accept by his own efforts the offer of God's grace, but only under the influence of just this grace. If we wish to avoid a sort "*regressus in infinitum*", then the Christian message must assume that all humans are loved by God in advance of all their own actions. Therefore Christ must be already present also in the other religions. Thus Christianity would misunderstand itself completely, if it wanted to fight other religions or to substitute them.

The expression "outside of the church no salvation" arose in the history of Christianity. The real meaning of this sentence is: "There is no other salvation than that proclaimed by the church. Salvation can only consist in communion with God, and this can be understood only, if it does not depend on created conditions, but is reliable. But then, it must consist in the eternal love from God to God, in which the world is assumed. This salvation cannot be restricted to Christians but is valid for humankind." The Christian faith states that this is the actual, deepest truth of all real religion. Far from surpassing the truth of other religions it brings this truth fully to light. And what about eventual deficiencies in Christianity or in the other religions? It will never be possible to understand them in the sense of the unique

12 Cf. HAJIME NAKAMURA, Die Grundlehren des Buddhismus – Ihre Wurzeln in Geschichte und Tradition, in: Buddhismus der Gegenwart, hrsg. von Heinrich Dumoulin, Freiburg 1970, 173–198,

object of faith which is our being sheltered in God's eternal love. This is the way God defends us from believing things outside of faith.

The 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus expressed this view in its "Complementary Norms" to the Constitutions, n. 265: "Considering the splitting, abuses and conflicts, to which the religions, also Christianity led in the course of history, dialogue tries to help to the break through of the uniting and liberating force which is inherent to each religion und thus to emphasize the importance of the religions for the well-being of mankind, for justice and peace in the world. " The splitting, abuses, and conflicts come in each case from a misunderstanding of religion. But if religion is understood not as a human performance, but as our being loved by God, then the Christian message can help to underline this uniting and liberating strength, which is inherent in each religion and is an actually unsurpassable reality. The Christian faith "emphasizes" the meaning of all religions.