

A Theological Study of Point of Contact Theory

Van E. Sanders

People Group Research Associate, Implementation Team of the Church Planting Group, North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention

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The purpose of this paper concerns the use of points of contact as bridges for communicating the gospel across the various cultures of the world yet unreached with the gospel. The paper has five main sections. The first section is a brief summary of the primary approaches to non-Christian religions. After this summary, a definition of the point of contact concept is presented. Third, the “biblical continuity-discontinuity model” is outlined. Fourth, key biblical passages relating to the point of contact concept are discussed. Lastly, the paper provides a historical survey of the point of contact concept.

Approaches to Christianity and Religions

Missionaries attempting cross-cultural evangelism among non-Christian people groups do not begin with a *tabula rasa*. All people groups hold a system of beliefs which reflect their worldview and culture. Any attempt to evangelize these peoples must recognize this fact and determine to what degree if any, continuity exists between the gospel and their preexisting belief system. The relationship between Christian revelation and the belief systems of the world carry significant weight at this point.

Contemporary missiologists encounter questions concerning a theology of religions anytime they consider communication of the gospel among non-Christian peoples and cultures. Throughout the twentieth century a variety of perspectives or approaches has been proposed to investigate the relationship between Christianity and world religions.

E. C. Dewick grouped the approaches into “four main keynotes”: (1) Conflict—other religions are enemies of the gospel; (2) Fulfillment—Christianity fulfills the good and true in other religions; (3) Co-operation—God speaks through non-Christian religions; and (4) Discontinuity—Christian revelation has nothing in common with non-Christian religions.¹ Ajith Fernando delineates three approaches: (1) Christianity is unique but salvation can be mediated through other religions; (2) Christianity is an equal with other faiths; and (3) salvation is through Christ only.² Paul Knitter speaks of four models of Christian attitudes towards other religions: (1) Conservative Evangelical, (2) Mainline, Protestant, (3) Catholic, and (4) Theocentric.³ Hendrick Kraemer framed the theology of religions issue as a matter of discontinuity, John Farquhar as fulfillment, and William Hocking as mutual appreciation.⁴ Considerable overlap exists within all of these writers and others.⁵

Alan Race proposed a threefold categorization in the 1980s: pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism.⁶ Race's categories are helpful for discussing theology of religion questions.

Pluralism and inclusivism contend that the existing belief system and its cultural expressions are compatible with the gospel. Pluralists and inclusivists disagree concerning the degree of compatibility. But they agree that significant continuity exists between Christianity and other religions. Culture equals or even exceeds Scripture concerning ultimate truth. Cultural relativism underlies this approach and leads to syncretism⁷ due to its uncritical acceptance of traditional religious beliefs and customs.

Exclusivism in general holds that the gospel is not compatible with the existing belief system. Exclusivists assert that a fundamental discontinuity exists between other religions and the Christian revelation. Extreme exclusivists⁸ believe that the non-Christian belief system must be discarded. This approach often imposes a cultural Christianity upon a people. Such a Christianity suppresses and forces underground the old forms of traditional beliefs. "Two-tier Christianity" or "split-level Christianity"⁹ often results from this type of cross-cultural evangelism or church planting.

Other exclusivists do not discard the entire non-Christian belief system. They emphasize that cultures and belief systems require transformation. These exclusivists find some value in the existing belief systems.

Race's three categories limit and obscure important particularities of a position. E. Luther Copeland contends that "the terminology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism is itself too exclusive."¹⁰ Jacques Dupuis proposes moving beyond simply viewing religious pluralism as an empirical fact.¹¹ The current situation requires one to "seek the root causes for pluralism and to ask what role the religions play in the redemptive plan of God for the universe."¹²

This paper argues that cross-cultural evangelism and church planting must honor both culture and Scripture. Such an approach responds to Copeland's question concerning the role of religions in God's redemptive plan. The Bible serves as the ultimate authority over any given belief system in any culture, but this does not preclude the possibility that certain aspects within the traditional belief system or culture can function as beginning points for presenting the gospel.

Such an approach avoids the extremes of the continuity and discontinuity positions, while seeking to utilize and incorporate existing beliefs in the non-Christian belief system that are theologically appropriate and beneficial to communicating the gospel in a manner that helps establish an indigenous Christianity. Such existing beliefs are points of contact for presenting the gospel. Point of contact theory argues that both continuity and discontinuity characterize the relationship between the gospel and the traditional belief system.

Definition of Point of Contact

This paper argues that points of contact are manifestations of general revelation that enhance communication of the gospel. This definition focuses on the communication of the gospel. It argues that all peoples, because of general revelation, know of God's existence, know of God's powerful and benevolent nature, and are conscious of God's moral demands in regard to their relationships with him. The sin-tainted *imago Dei* leads to a variety of subjective interpretations of general revelation.¹³

Despite these subjective interpretations, points of contact found in non-Christian cultures and worldviews reflect the three domains of general revelation.¹⁴ Points of contact exhibit relationships to aspects of biblical truth. These fragments of truth may be found in the philosophical presuppositions that form the framework of the belief system. Or they may be one isolated element of truth in one sub-system of the culture. No matter where they exist, these elements of truth can serve as a communication bridge for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Historically, point of contact theory sought to answer the theological question of whether or not a point of contact (German, *Anknüpfungspunkt*) exists for the gospel within the sinner. More specifically the issue focused on what, if anything, "may be appealed to as a means of preparing one for the gospel from within one's self."¹⁵

Debate over this issue peaked in the early twentieth-century with the discussions between Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. In his book *Revelation and Reason*, Brunner argued that the sense of guilt serves as the point of contact. He says, "The bad conscience, the sense of guilt, is the point of contact for faith. It is the spot at which the change of direction ought to begin. The sense of guilt, as a negative relation with God, is the point of contact for faith."¹⁶

Donald Bloesch argues that for Brunner, the lack of such a point of contact between reason and revelation results in a revelation that "would be a sheer mystery to human understanding."¹⁷ This is because, according to Brunner, the "knowledge of sin is a necessary presupposition of the understanding of the divine message of grace."¹⁸

Barth rejects this notion on the basis that sin completely destroys the *imago Dei* in man. Fallen man cannot know God through human reason alone. For Barth, the only point of contact occurs when God creates faith in the sinner through the sinner's encounter with the Word of God. Barth adds that points of contact are newly posited by God, not present already in the nature of man. They do not have a place in natural theology.¹⁹

The debate over the point of contact concept between Brunner and Barth primarily focused on the theological context. However, mission leaders began applying the concept to mission contexts in order to signify "elements in the non-Christian religions that the Christian missionary can seize upon when communicating the gospel message."²⁰ As a result of the growing influence of nineteenth century European Protestant natural theology, continuity between Christianity and

non-Christian religions gradually replaced the continuity-discontinuity position as the dominant approach.²¹ Ecumenical mission agencies and leaders focused more attention upon the common ground that existed between Christians and non-Christians. Eventually, the concept of points of contact in mission methodology became synonymous with the concept of common ground.

Eugene Nida illustrates the intent of the common ground approach with Pope Gregory of the sixth century.²² Pope Gregory instructed his missionaries working among English pagans to maintain the same cultural forms as the local pagan religious practices but infuse those forms with Christian beliefs. The result was “a continuation of the same cultural forms and beliefs, with only a different nomenclature.”²³ No change of beliefs occurred.

Ecumenical Protestants advocated a similar usage of this concept. They focused on common ground as primarily conceptual in nature rather than Roman Catholicism’s emphasis on visual symbols. Ecumenical missionaries who used the common ground approach contended that the non-Christian religions contained beliefs harmonious with Christianity. They found “common ground for the establishment of a Christian orientation as the fulfillment of these distorted, but basically true, aspirations.”²⁴

The Jerusalem Conference of 1928 exemplified the shift to the common ground perspective. Lesslie Newbigin states that this conference identified values in the world’s religions that in essence reflected the one Truth. These values included “the sense of the majesty of God” in Islam, “the deep sympathy for the world’s sorrow” in Buddhism, and “the desire for contact with ultimate reality” in Hinduism.²⁵ The pluralist approach that emerged during this time, with its emphases on comparative religions, phenomenology of religion, religious psychology, and theocentrism, created the foundation for the common ground concept. It drew upon the idea of a “common thread of humanity’s interest in the noumenous.”²⁶

The ecumenical common ground usage focused on identifying a common basis of belief.²⁷ But the point of contact approach focuses on identifying elements that make communication possible. Nida argues that no two beliefs in any two systems, despite their superficial similarities, present a basis for common ground. “They are only points of contact, on the basis of which we may communicate the distinctiveness of the Christian faith.”²⁸ In other words, points of contact serve as beginning points for the missionary’s encounter with the non-Christian. Eventually, points of contact may lead to the creation of functional substitutes which express new beliefs in new cultural forms rather than trying to change the content of beliefs while retaining the old cultural forms.

In an earlier book, Nida wrote that human needs shared by all, such as mental and physical health, fulfillment of hopes and aspirations, satisfactory training of one’s children, and a faith as to the ultimate meaning of life, function as valid points of contact.²⁹ At that time, Nida’s list reflected Hendrick Kraemer’s understanding of point of contact.

Kraemer, a Dutch missiologist, wrote *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*,³⁰ for the

Tamparam Conference of the International Missionary Conference in 1938. Barth greatly influenced the thinking of Kraemer concerning the nature of points of contact. Kraemer followed Barth and rejected Brunner's understanding of points of contact. For Kraemer, points of contact did not reside within the reason of the lost sinner or through general revelation.³¹ He argued that only one point of contact exists. "This one point of contact is the disposition and the attitude of the missionary. Such is the golden rule. The way to live up to this rule is to have an untiring and genuine interest in the religion, the ideas, the sentiments, the institutions-in short, in the whole range of life of the people among whom one works. . . ."³²

Kraemer's rejection of points of contact within fallen mankind through general revelation is untenable. In essence Kraemer disallows the efficacy of general revelation within the sinner by restricting points of contact to the missionary's relationship with the non-Christian. According to Grudem, "Kraemer's radical rejection of natural revelation has not gained wide acceptance; it rests upon the unlikely view that Rom 1:21 refers to knowledge of God in theory but not in fact."³³

The fact that evangelicals today do not commonly use the term "point of contact" stems from its earlier association with ecumenical theologians and missiologists who emphasized continuity within their theologies of fulfillment. But the concept of a point of contact as something within the mind and experience of the sinner serving as preparation for the gospel remains a familiar idea among evangelical missionaries and missiologists today.³⁴ This usage of the point of contact concept rests upon an assumption held by many evangelical proponents of general revelation that sinful men and women are capable of having "some internal knowledge or perception that God exists and that he is a powerful Creator."³⁵ Proponents of such ideas hold that all people display a certain amount of knowledge about God, albeit distorted knowledge. They would agree with the statement on the relationship of animism to Christian revelation at the World Missionary Conference of 1910:

As to the crucial question of the attitude to be taken up towards Animism, any difference of opinion that may exist is apparent rather than real. *It is held by the majority that there is a modicum of truth in all religious systems, God not having left Himself without a witness in the peoples. The animistic religions present certain points of contact for the preaching of the Gospel*(emphasis mine).³⁶

This paper maintains that the biblical continuity-discontinuity position best supports the use of points of contact for cross-cultural communication of the gospel. This position does not advocate finding common ground in order that the gospel can be the fulfillment of non-Christian belief systems. Identifying points of contact does not mean looking for Christianity in traditional religions. Neither does this approach follow Thomas Aquinas and try to alter or improve the faults of the non-Christian religions that sprang from "defective reasoning."³⁷ This paper argues that points of contact are manifestations of general revelation that enhance communication of the gospel. The biblical continuity-discontinuity model, discussed next, provides the theological foundation for such points of contact.

The Biblical Continuity-Discontinuity Model

Richard Gehman's study of African traditional religion among the Akamba people of East Africa illustrates the biblical continuity-discontinuity position advocated in this paper.³⁸ Gehman proposes a biblical continuity-discontinuity approach because of the untenable conclusions espoused by proponents of both the continuity position and the discontinuity position. Both positions, usually maintained as rigid, stand-alone positions, tend to overlook the truths of one another. Gehman states:

On the one hand, there is a radical discontinuity between African Traditional Religion and biblical faith. Man by his sinful nature is in rebellion against God and fleeing from God. Man in his culture and religion has sought to deify man and remove God from His rightful pre-eminence. Repentance and conversion are required. This is biblical truth. On the other hand, the discontinuity is not so radical that the Gospel is preached in a vacuum. Despite man's rebellion, God in His grace pursues men and women, seeking them out and disclosing something of Himself and will for them. Thus there is a measure of continuity.³⁹

The biblical continuity-discontinuity model recognizes truth in both the continuity and discontinuity positions. It seeks to avoid the extremes of both positions. The author examines the continuity and discontinuity positions before delineating the biblical continuity-discontinuity position.

The Continuity Approach

Historically the continuity approach emphasized the "continuity of God's revealing and redeeming activity in Christ with his activity among all men everywhere."⁴⁰ Nathan Söderblom illustrates the most extreme degree of continuity by stating:

It is clearly absurd to restrict divine revelation to Christ. Once one has become familiar with extra-Biblical belief in God in China and Japan, India and Persia, Egypt and Babylonia, Greece and Rome, it is quite impossible to remain so exclusive. Either genuine divine revelation is to be found equally outside the Bible, or it does not occur in the Bible. As matters now stand the history of religions offers us no third alternative.⁴¹

Söderblom exemplifies the pluralism position. Pluralists believe that the world religions are equally effective in helping humanity gain salvation. Several key assumptions undergird the pluralist viewpoint. They believe that the different names for God found in various religions and cultures refer to the God of the Bible. Some contend that religion evolves. The genuine motivation and worship of the particular religious adherent serves as the primary determinant for salvation. Pluralists reason that any religion able to move a person from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness is valid. This position maintains a theocentric view of reality, rather than a

Christocentric view. Leading proponents of this view include John Hick, Paul Knitter, William Hocking, and historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith.⁴²

Not all proponents of the continuity position qualify as pluralists. Proponents of inclusivism, such as Clark Pinnock, Karl Rahner, John Sanders, and Raimundo Panikkar also maintain the continuity position.⁴³ Inclusivists argue that sincere adherents of other religions may be included in Christ even though they are unaware of the gospel. Rahner refers to individuals in these situations as anonymous Christians. Such “Christians” do not have an explicit faith or consciousness that they are Christians, but in reality they participate in God’s grace. This position holds that God makes salvation available to all people, and Jesus Christ is the only mediator of salvation. Thus, for inclusivists, salvation can occur through one’s response to general revelation in non-Christian religions. Rahner exemplifies this position by declaring “a non-Christian religion can be recognized as a LAWFUL religion (although only in different degrees) without thereby denying the error and depravity contained in it. . . .”⁴⁴

A primary distinction between the inclusivist and the pluralist concerns the inclusivist’s view of Christ’s atonement. Contrary to the pluralist’s view, inclusivists contend that no salvation exists apart from the atonement of Jesus Christ. The inclusivist believes that salvation results only through Christ, but this salvation does not have to spring from an explicit faith in the historical Jesus Christ. The pluralist argues all religions contain salvific potential, and Christianity simply serves as one of many ways to God.

Both the pluralist and inclusivist approaches maintain the continuity position and posit general revelation as potentially salvific. Advocates of both positions demonstrate concern for the unevangelized, specifically, those who have no opportunity to respond to the direct message of Jesus Christ and Christianity.⁴⁵ They insist upon a universally accessible salvation.

Some exclusivists propose alternative remedies to pluralists’ and inclusivists’ demands for a universally accessible salvation. Alister McGrath represents this approach and contends that God brings to salvation those without access to the gospel.⁴⁶ He writes, “Where the word is not or cannot be preached by human agents, God is not inhibited from bringing people to faith in him even if that act of hope and trust may lack the fully robed character of an informed Christian faith.”⁴⁷

McGrath supports his position with stories from Islamic countries where Muslims convert to Christianity after seeing the risen Christ in dreams. McGrath does not argue that these occurrences represent the normal pattern for winning adherents to Christianity. Thus he maintains historic Christianity’s focus on the necessity for the church to take the evangelistic initiative among non-Christian peoples. His position stands in stark contrast with the pluralist application of the continuity position which emasculates the mission of the New Testament Church.⁴⁸

Both the pluralist and inclusivist positions erase significant distinctions between general and

special revelation. Without these distinctions, points of contact are misconstrued as potentially salvific in themselves or as evidence to support the idea that salvation occurs within other religions apart from the special revelation of Jesus Christ. Such beliefs diminish traditional missionary motivations for cross-cultural evangelism. As J. I. Packer asks, “What is the point of asking anyone to change religions, if all religions are Christianity in disguise?”⁴⁹ Effective use of points of contact in cross-cultural evangelism requires a sound biblical theology. The theological parameters of the continuity position extend too wide for such a biblical theology.

The Discontinuity Approach

The discontinuity approach developed as a response to the continuity position. It rejected continuity, with its foundations in Enlightenment skepticism and the denial of biblical revelation and Christ’s uniqueness.⁵⁰ The continuity position rose to prominence with assistance from the discipline of *religionswissenschaft*, the science of religion.⁵¹ The traditional view of a unique Christianity distinct from all other religions diminished as a result.⁵²

Karl Barth as a primary proponent of discontinuity, opposed continuity. His discontinuity involved an attack on natural theology as the great enemy of the faith.⁵³ Natural theology argued that non-Christians had the spiritual potential within them for understanding theological truth by their reasoning capacities alone. G. C. Berkouwer contends that Barth’s attack always included the traditional view of general revelation.⁵⁴ Barth’s attack on natural theology included general revelation because he rejected the possibility of man’s ability to know anything about God due to the results of the fall. He argued that divine revelation lacked an intrinsically rational element. Therefore, one’s knowledge of God emerges at the earliest moment of faith.

For Barth, discontinuity meant that non-Christian religion displays the darkness of the heart and demonstrates the opposite of faith, unbelief.⁵⁵ He believed that, “Religion ist niemals und nirgends als solche und in sich wahr. Das sie wahr, d.h. das sie in Wahrheit Erkenntnis und Verehrung Gottes und Versöhnung des Menschen mit Gott sei. . . .”⁵⁶

Barth rejected the idea of points of contact, as defined by Emil Brunner, between the Gospel and world religions.⁵⁷ It was Brunner’s contention that humanity carries within itself “a capacity for revelation” or “a possibility of . . . being addressed,” which enables a person to apprehend and receive God’s revelation.⁵⁸

As noted earlier, Kraemer agreed with Barth concerning the impossibility of points of contact as defined by Brunner. Kraemer also argued against Hocking’s notion of a common essence among world religions.⁵⁹ Kraemer insisted that Christianity was absolutely unique, *sui generis*. He believed that a fundamental discontinuity existed between God’s self revelation in Jesus Christ and the whole range of human religion. The idea of the gospel as fulfillment of other religions constituted an impossibility. For Kraemer, the method of sharing beliefs with other belief systems results in “the suicide of missions.”⁶⁰ “There could be no continuity between the religions and Christianity.”⁶¹

Kraemer's book, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, became the standard work for the discontinuity position long after the Tambaram conference. Modern-day proponents of Kraemer's radical discontinuity position are classified as exclusivists.

Exclusivists argue that an individual's salvation depends upon special revelation. They reject the possibility that general revelation can provide salvific knowledge of God. Instead, they hold that salvation exists only in Jesus Christ, who as God incarnate, the unique God-man, came into the world to save humanity. Christianity constitutes the only true religion; no salvation resides in other religions. The gospel exhibits a universal scope, since God desires all persons to be saved, but God will only save through one's explicit faith in Christ, thus the exclusivism of the gospel.

Extreme exclusivists such as Ronald Nash and Harold Lindsell contend that non-Christian religions call for opposition, since they contain nothing of value and are evil.⁶² Pronouncing judgment and seeking reconciliation serve as the only valid purposes for contacting non-Christian religions.⁶³ Critics often characterize this position as too narrow in its view of God's dealings with all mankind and "betraying an intolerant attitude of exclusiveness that is alien to the tolerant spirit of Christ."⁶⁴ Pluralists and inclusivists maintain that the exclusivist's view of reality demonstrates both arrogance and an imperialistic attitude.

A concern for all people to have access to salvation forms the basis for these criticisms. Pluralists and inclusivists contend that a just God must make salvation universally available, even in places without knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. John Hick proposes:

But can it possibly be the will of the loving heavenly Father of Jesus' teaching that only that minority of men and women who have the luck to be born into a Christian part of the world can enter eternal life? This would not be the work of a God of limitless and universal love, who values all human beings equally, but of an arbitrary cosmic tyrant, more fit to be reviled as the devil than to be worshiped as God.⁶⁵

Harold Netland advocates the exclusivist position and the use of the term "exclusivism" but regrets the connotations of the term. He says that "the use of the term 'exclusivism' is somewhat unfortunate since it has for many people undesirable connotations of narrow-mindedness, arrogance, insensitivity to others, self-righteousness, bigotry, and so on."⁶⁶

Another problem for the exclusivist position concerns the failure by continuity proponents to distinguish between faith and culture. This confusion leads to the assertion that the rejection of someone's religious beliefs equates to rejecting their culture. Since pluralists and inclusivists maintain that all cultures (and by extension, religious beliefs) deserve acceptance as equals in the arena of a multi-cultural world, then the exclusivist position requires rejection.

General and Special Revelation

At this point it is important to clarify general revelation and special revelation in regard to their relationships to the continuity and discontinuity positions. Some have questioned whether or not a clear distinction exists between general and special revelation. “Are there really two distinct categories with regard to the content of revelation?”⁶⁷ Such questions reflect a concern to address the difficult questions related to the knowledge of God among non-Christians. Perhaps a better question and one which offers answers to these concerns is, “How much information does general revelation provide?”⁶⁸ According to Carl F. H. Henry:

The Bible depicts general revelation as an intellectual content that confronts humanity both externally and internally, and as conveying cognitively reliable data to all, even if persons differ somewhat in their admission and retention of elements of that revelation. Nobody is without some objective knowledge conveyed by general revelation, a knowledge that renders every person guilty for revolt against light, in view of humankind’s attempted suffocation of that revelatory content.⁶⁹

Traditional evangelical theology maintains that general revelation consists of a general type of information or knowledge about God’s character and existence. This information resides in three domains: (1) in nature through observing the created order (Ps 19:1-6, Rom 1:18-21); (2) in history through God’s benevolence to all people (Matt 5:45, Acts 14:15-17); and (3) in a person’s conscience through his or her understanding of moral right and wrong (Rom 2:14-15).⁷⁰ The knowledge is general in the sense that all people have this knowledge and in that it deals only with the universal concerns of God’s existence, God’s attributes, and God’s demands for morality.

All people can recognize general revelation because the *imago Dei* resides in all people. Again Henry writes, “Historic Christian theism speaks of God only in view of his rational self-disclosure and links man to his Maker because of a rationally significant divine image through which God addresses him both in general revelation and in scripturally revealed truths.”⁷¹

General revelation does not address the special aspects of the gospel.⁷² Millard Erickson notes that Scripture does not indicate the possibility that through general revelation some may have implicit faith in Christ. He says of implicit faith, “It is not something that we can rely on as an alternative to presentation to everyone of the message of salvation in Christ.”⁷³

General revelation depends upon special revelation for the full revelation of the historical gospel. Bruce Demarest and Richard Harpel argue, “Epistemologically general revelation precedes special revelation. General revelation gives all people everywhere an elemental knowledge of God and the sense of spiritual need that renders special revelation meaningful and relevant to life.”⁷⁴

Some oppose the idea that general revelation and special revelation refer to two distinct realities. Oftentimes, such opposition stems from the result of attributing the excesses of natural theology to general revelation. Historically, proponents of natural theology exhibited an unbiblical trust of

human reason. As a result, people place too great a confidence in humankind to know God through reason apart from special revelation from God in the Bible. Ultimately this leads to the conclusion that non-Christian religions are potentially salvific.

Those who oppose the efficacy of general revelation, contend that such knowledge gathered from the world is too untrustworthy. They argue that man's sinfulness and God's transcendent nature preclude accurate knowledge of God through human reason alone. Evangelical proponents of the general revelation/special revelation dichotomy agree that the sinfulness of man distorts the knowledge of God acquired through general revelation. But they argue that the proper integration of special revelation with general revelation remedies this problem. Enns writes, "General revelation, although not adequate to procure salvation, is nonetheless an important antecedent to salvation. General revelation is God revealing certain truths and aspects about His nature to all humanity, which is essential and preliminary to God's special revelation."⁷⁵

Theologians who distinguish between general and special revelation identify two primary domains of special revelation: the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. Scholars posit various modes of special revelation. These include Scripture, divine speech not recorded in Scripture, supernatural acts and historical events, dreams, interpretation of dreams, casting of lots, Urim and Thummim, and angels.⁷⁶ Muslim dreams of Christ, reported by McGrath, may be interpreted by some exclusivists as special revelation.

Special revelation affirms God's general revelation. Henry refers to special revelation as redemptive revelation. He argues that special revelation "publishes the good tidings that the holy and merciful God promises salvation as a divine gift to man who cannot save himself and that he has now fulfilled that promise in the gift of his Son in whom all men are called to believe."⁷⁷

The Biblical Continuity-Discontinuity Approach

The biblical continuity-discontinuity approach integrates the realities of both special and general revelation in the process of communicating the gospel cross-culturally. Thus, special revelation and general revelation complement one another and present a unified understanding of God. Grudem argues that the knowledge of God is given to all through general revelation. He says, "General revelation provides a basis of information that enables the gospel to make sense to a non-Christian's heart and mind: unbelievers know that God exists and that they have broken his standards, so the news that Christ died to pay for their sins should truly come as good news to them."⁷⁸

A broad theological spectrum exists between continuity and discontinuity. This spectrum stretches from an extreme form of exclusivism to an extreme form of pluralism. Exclusivism represents the extreme application of the discontinuity position and pluralism denotes the extreme application of the continuity position. Inclusivists advocate continuity, but not to the same degree as the pluralists.

Both continuity positions argue that salvific truth is knowable without special revelation. Exclusivists reject this view. David Clark states that “the question of special revelation and salvation is relevant only within exclusivism.”⁷⁹ He maintains that the positions of inclusivism, pluralism, and relativism⁸⁰ do not concern themselves at all with the role of special revelation in salvation because salvation, in these positions, occurs in a variety of ways.

But for evangelical missiologists, the questions surrounding the nature and role of special revelation relate to the heart of the mission enterprise. Therefore, these missiologists devote much attention to the question of whether or not general revelation holds salvific potential in and of itself or only preparatory⁸¹ for salvation and dependent upon special revelation.

This attention highlights the importance of the biblical continuity-discontinuity model. This model seeks to apply both special and general revelation to the process of cross-cultural communication of the gospel. It asserts that general revelation serves as a necessary antecedent to special revelation. Also, this model allows for a variety of manifestations of general revelation. These manifestations occur in all people groups of the world through their worldviews and cultures and provide points of contact to facilitate more effective cross-cultural evangelism. These manifestations lack the sufficiency in themselves to provide salvation. They depend upon special revelation to bring full meaning to the fragments of truth that general revelation supplies. Demarest summarizes well the interdependence of general and special revelation:

The law written on the heart informs the creature of his spiritual duties vis-a-vis the Creator and Judge of the world. Only when one is conscious of his guiltiness does the receptivity of grace become a possibility. Only when one sees himself as a sinner before the God of Creation does the offer of reconciliation in the gospel make sense. If intuitional and inferential knowledge of God were not present, God’s gracious communication to man in the form of special revelation would remain a meaningless abstraction. Special revelation, then, begins at the point where man’s natural knowledge of God ends. Special revelation completes, not negates, the disclosure of God in nature, providence, and conscience.⁸²

The biblical continuity-discontinuity position maintains that a discontinuity exists between Christianity and other belief systems in regard to salvation. This position advances a strongly conversionist position and emphasizes that salvation exists through explicit faith in Jesus Christ. Sinful men and women must repent of their sins and give their allegiance to Jesus Christ rather than to themselves or other gods.

However, in spite of this discontinuity, some continuity exists between the gospel and other belief systems. Despite man’s fallen, rebellious nature, God seeks to redeem unbelievers and restore them to right relationships with him. Through general revelation, God pursues a relationship with mankind. J. Budziszewski believes that general revelation itself serves as a point of contact with non-Christians. He argues, “Our point of contact with nonbelievers is established by God himself. That point is general revelation.”⁸³

The biblical continuity-discontinuity model argues that points of contact from general revelation occur in nature, conscience, and history. Every person and culture responds to the revelatory information of these three domains in different ways. But these manifestations of general revelation establish a measure of continuity with the gospel. The degree of this continuity varies from person to person and from culture to culture. Many animistic cultures have a substantial degree of continuity with Christianity. Alan Tippett explains:

I contend the philosophical presuppositions of animism are such as permit our engagement in evangelistic dialogue in terms of scriptural values. The animist is open to Scripture. *The Evangelical who takes the Bible at its face value has a common basis for discussion with the animist.* This is not so with the demythologizer or the universalist (emphasis mine).⁸⁴

Cyril Okorocha's study of the Igbo of Nigeria support Tippett's postulate. He contends that the Igbo converted to Christianity rather than Islam because they found more theological points of contact between that religion than Islam."⁸⁵

Several of Tippett's "philosophical presuppositions" correspond favorably with the three domains of general revelation mentioned above: nature, conscience, and history.

The philosophical continuity between many animistic belief systems and Christianity necessitates the use of the biblical continuity-discontinuity model because the biblical continuity-discontinuity model provides a theologically sound integration of general and special revelation.⁸⁶ This model recognizes points of contact in general revelation, but resists viewing points of contact as potentially salvific. In this model, general and special revelation are understood as both personal and propositional, thus avoiding the extremes of the discontinuity position which emphasizes the propositional nature of revelation and the continuity position which emphasizes the personal, subjective nature of revelation. John Stott illustrates the focus of the continuity-discontinuity position when he states:

The living God is a personal God, who made us as persons in his own image and insists on treating as persons the persons He has made. So the whole process of revelation has been the self-disclosure of a Person to persons, to real persons like ourselves who actually lived in a certain place at a certain time. In saying this, I am not denying that God has revealed His truth in word, I am rather asserting that His revelation has been 'personal' and 'propositional' at one and the same time. That is, the truths He has revealed have not descended from heaven by parachute. They have rather been made known in and through the living experience of human beings, culminating in His own Son, the Word made flesh.⁸⁷

The apostles encountered a variety of religions as they preached the gospel during the New Testament period. Paul in particular utilized cognitive bridges between the gospel and his audiences as he proclaimed the gospel. Paul also addressed the function of general revelation in

regard to one's knowledge of God. The following section focuses on several key passages of Paul that relate to using points of contact as bridges for cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

Key Biblical Passages Relating to the Point of Contact Concept

Four primary New Testament passages support the point of contact concept. The first two, Rom 1:18-21 and 2:12-15, support the doctrine of general revelation. In this regard, these passages provide insight into the point of contact concept. As noted earlier, point of contact theory rests upon a certain degree of continuity between Christianity and the belief systems of non-Christian individuals. This continuity resides in the three domains of general revelation: knowledge of God's existence, knowledge of God's character or attributes, and knowledge of right and wrong. These two passages describe how God reveals himself to all mankind through the creation of the world and people.

The first passage examines the creation of the world and its revelation of God's existence and attributes. The second passage explains how God created people with a conscience and innate knowledge of right and wrong. When combined, these passages forcefully demonstrate that all peoples and cultures possess significant points of contact that can facilitate communication of the gospel.

The third and fourth passages are Acts 14:8-18 and 17:16-32. These two passages illustrate the apostle Paul's use of general revelation as he communicated the gospel to first century, non-Christian peoples. The passages relate to the effective use of points of contact for current attempts at cross-cultural evangelism. These verses also demonstrate the biblical appropriateness of the use of points of contact in all types of evangelism.

Romans 1 and 2

Rom 1:16, 17 explain the focus of Romans 1 and 2. Rom 1:16 declares the universal nature of the gospel when it states that the gospel of Christ is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." This verse also recognizes the particularity of the gospel audience when it says that the gospel is "for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Paul emphasizes the different audiences of the gospel in order to lay the foundation for his discussion of the different types of revelations God has given to Jews and non-Jews.

These passages also highlight the progressive self-revelation of God from the general to the specific. In Rom 1:17, Paul characterizes the subject of the entire epistle as righteousness by faith, rather than by one's obedience to the law. Marvin Vincent argues that for Greeks during the time of Paul's writing to the Romans, social usage and context determined righteousness.⁸⁸ In other words, the morality of the Greeks, which the classical philosophers held as self-evident, depended upon a social basis of righteousness and utilized social constraints to limit the

individual desires or preferences for the well-being of the society. This stands in sharp contrast to Paul's explanation of righteousness in Romans. In Romans, "God is the absolute and final standard of right, and every wrong is a sin against God. Righteousness is union with God in character."⁸⁹

This contrast between the classical Greek view of righteousness and Paul's teaching in Romans, illustrates the qualitative difference between the truth revealed from general revelation and that revealed by special revelation. Vincent argues that "righteousness as an attribute of God was revealed before the Gospel [through general revelation]. Righteousness in this [New Testament] sense is a matter of special revelation through the Gospel."⁹⁰ Douglas Moo supports this interpretation when he states that Rom 1:18-3:20 is "a preparation for, rather than as part of, Paul's exposition of the gospel of God's righteousness."⁹¹ According to Moo, the gospel that reveals God's righteousness makes sense only against the backdrop of man's sinful condition with its rejection and subversion of God's natural revelation. He states, "The knowledge of God rejected by those depicted in Rom 1:18-32 comes solely through 'natural revelation'--the evidences of God in creation and perhaps the conscience."⁹² These two passages teach that both Gentiles (Rom 1:18-21) and Jews (Rom 2:12-15) carry responsibility and guilt for their sins whether that knowledge comes through general revelation or through special revelation.

A progression from general revelation to special revelation exists among the non-Jewish and Jewish subjects of Paul's writing. Romans 1-3 define four possible categories of relationship to God, which correspond to this progression. These categories reflect the type of revelation received. Moo contends, "Paul's indictment of humanity in 1:18-3:8 proceeds as if it were moving inward through a series of concentric circles: from the whole of humanity (1:18), to humanity apart from special revelation--mainly, then, Gentiles (1:19-32), to the 'righteous' person but mainly the Jew (2:1-16), to the Jew explicitly (2:17-3:8)."⁹³

Rom 1:19-21 declares that God makes known to all people his existence and his nature. A. T. Robertson notes that this knowledge of God ($\gamma\nu\omicron\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$) in Rom 1:19 and 21 refers to "a knowledge by personal experience."⁹⁴ The phrase "manifest in them" ($\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \alpha\text{-}\tau\omicron\text{-}\varsigma$) in verse 19, refers to the place of this knowledge, "in their hearts and consciences."⁹⁵ These verses clearly indicate that this knowledge was evident to all and in all through the creation. Aída Spencer argues, "Paul uses *voιέω* [to comprehend], a synonym of *καθορ_ω* [to clearly see] which, according to Bauer's *Lexicon*, is 'of rational reflection or inner contemplation.' In the Gospels, Eph 3:4, and Heb 11:3, *voιέω*, refers to more than knowing a fact; it refers to perceiving the significance of the fact."⁹⁶ Spencer argues that in verses 19-21 Paul stressed the clarity of God's self revelation by word order ($\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu$ precedes its verb) and by the use of many synonyms for clarity ($\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu$, 'manifest'; $\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omicron}\omega$, 'make clear'; $\gamma\nu\omicron\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ 'known'; *καθορ_ω*, 'see thoroughly').⁹⁷

John Murray argues that this knowledge does not refer to the knowledge of Rom 2:14, 15. The knowledge of Rom 2:14-15 exists in the mind of man and is sometimes called *notitia Dei insita* or *sensus divinitatis*. Instead, the knowledge of Rom 1:19-21 refers to a "knowledge derived

from revelation that is external to himself,” in creation.⁹⁸ Frederick Godet states emphatically that Paul in this passage, refers to “what can be known of God without the help of an extraordinary revelation.”⁹⁹ The reason this knowledge may be manifest in them stems from the important fact that “manifestation of truth to men always presupposes the mind and consciousness of men.”¹⁰⁰

The content of this knowledge resides in the creation. According to H. C. G. Moule, Paul means that “ever since there was a universe to observe, and a man to observe it, the being and will of the Divine Artificer have been discernable.”¹⁰¹ Robert Haldane explains, “By the works of creation, and from those of a general providence, God can be fully recognized as the Creator of heaven and earth, and thence His natural attributes may be inferred.”¹⁰² John Calvin believed that creation functions in a manner similar to a mirror, reflecting the invisible attributes of God the Creator.¹⁰³ In these verses Paul perpetuates the common Old Testament argument found in the Psalms, Job, and Isaiah.¹⁰⁴ This argument asserts that the created world demonstrates the character and existence of God.

Paul lists only two attributes of God that creation reveals. These two attributes, the eternal power of God and his divinity, though invisible to the senses of man, are “clearly apprehended in mental conception.”¹⁰⁵ Other attributes of God exist even though Paul only lists two. The eternal power of God and his divinity serve as representative attributes for God’s entire nature. They summarily state his existence and his all-encompassing omnipotence.

The first attribute mentioned by Paul relates to God’s eternal power. Godet argued that “power is that which immediately arrests man, when the spectacle of nature presents itself to his view.”¹⁰⁶ Concerning eternal power Murray writes:

[Eternal power] is specific and it means that the attribute of eternity is predicated of God’s power. The implication is that the eternity of God as well as the eternity of his power is in view. Phenomena disclose the *νοούμενα* of God’s transcendent perfection and specific divinity. It is not a finite cause that the work of creation manifests but the eternal power and divinity of the Creator.¹⁰⁷

Paul asserts that the majesty of creation requires an omnipotent Creator, who himself never grows old but is everlasting. John Parry insightfully delineates the progression of Paul’s logic by writing:

The primary conceptions of the Maker, formed by reflection upon things, are power and divinity. The fundamental assumption implied is that there must be a Maker--things could not make themselves, and man obviously did not make them. This assumption might well be taken by Paul as universally agreed. From that he sees man’s reflection passing to the conception of power, and lasting or spiritual power; the conception of divinity is a further step, logically if not chronologically, first involving hardly more than antithesis to man and nature, but growing more complex with continued reflection; it involves qualitative

conceptions of the Maker, not merely quantitative conceptions of His power.¹⁰⁸

Paul's phrase "eternal power" results in a knowledge of God's existence because the entirety of creation is a demonstration of power, which itself shows the power of the one who created it. The fact that this power is eternal implies that God has existed from eternity. Albert Barnes argues these verses demonstrate "there is proof, in the works of creation, of power which must have existed from eternity, or have belonged to an eternal being."¹⁰⁹

Concerning the second attribute, the Godhead, (*θειότης*) or God's divinity, Robertson writes that this word refers to the quality of *θε_ος* and corresponds to the Latin *divinitas* or divine. *θειότης* therefore, means "God's divine nature and properties."¹¹⁰ *θειότης* is a summary of all the attributes of God. The revelation through creation results in a limited knowledge of God's deity, but sufficient to keep people from idolatry. Richard Trench argues that *θειότης* only refers to those attributes of God knowable only by God's revelation of Himself through nature. He argues:

It is not to be doubted that St. Paul uses this vaguer, more abstract, and less personal word, just because he would affirm that men may know God's power and majesty from his works; but would not imply that they may know Himself from these, or from anything short of the revelation of his Eternal Word. Motives not dissimilar induce him to use *θε_ον* rather than *θεός* in addressing the Athenians on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:29).¹¹¹

Charles Hodge argues that the invisible attributes refer to God's "goodness, wisdom, power, and majesty."¹¹² God's works of creation manifest his invisible attributes. However, they only declare his eternal power and divine nature. "One has to look elsewhere for the disclosure of his love and grace --i.e., to Scripture and especially to the revelation of God in his Son (Jn 1:14)."¹¹³ Haldane states, "In the revelation of the word, the grand truth is the deity of Christ; in the light of nature, the grand truth is the deity of the Creator."¹¹⁴

Calvin argues that the "idea of goodness is conveyed in the word, *θειότης*."¹¹⁵ He substantiates this claim by applying verse 21 to Paul's choice of the word *θειότης*. He writes, "Two things are laid to the charge of the Gentiles which bear a reference to the two things said here--they did not glorify him as God, and they were not thankful. He made Himself known by power as God, and by the beneficent exercise of that power, he had laid claim to the gratitude of his creatures."¹¹⁶

The eighteenth-century theologian Herman Venema noted that "goodness was regarded by many of the heathens as the primary attribute of Deity. Among the Greeks, goodness was the expression by which the Supreme Being was distinguished."¹¹⁷ This explains how the Greeks in Paul's day would have understood his argument in verses 18-21. They likely agreed with him that goodness constitutes a primary attribute of God. Paul used this same line of argument with the Lycaonians and Athenians as he sought to communicate the gospel to them.

Paul argues in Rom 1:18-21 that through creation, God reveals his existence. He also argues that creation demonstrates certain attributes of God, such as his benevolence. But a further

understanding of God's benevolence emerges through the passage of time which provides a historical perspective of God's goodness to all mankind. Thus, these verses illustrate general revelation manifested in two domains, nature and history. Paul uses points of contact from these two domains in Lystra and Athens. This will be examined later. Before discussing these examples in Acts, the author examines the third domain, conscience, in Rom 2:12-15.

In Rom 2:12-15 Paul shifts his focus to the revelation given to the Jews. Paul's argument demonstrates that the Jews, with the revealed Law (the Torah), possess as much guilt before God for their sins as do Gentiles, who sin in regard to the natural law written on their hearts. While Rom 2 primarily focuses on the Jew, the contrasts Paul makes with the Gentiles, shed light on the knowledge of God in the non-Christian through the function of the conscience. Therefore this passage is germane to the point of contact concept because of what it teaches concerning the role of conscience in the non-Christian and the existence of a law written on their hearts.

The work of the law written on the heart (Rom 2:15) refers to a "natural, inborn capacity, through their own innate sense" to understand right and wrong.¹¹⁸ The effects of the law relate to a person's ability to distinguish right from wrong or to understand "things required and stipulated by the law."¹¹⁹

The notion of an innate sense of right and wrong reflects a popular Greek conception in Paul's day. Godet explains how in Greek society, pre-Christian philosophers such as Neoptolemus in Philoctetes, Antigone, Socrates, and Sophocles exemplify in a positive manner, the effects of this innate law.¹²⁰ But Paul uses the concept negatively rather than positively. Therefore, Paul's argument declares that the knowledge of God's moral demands demonstrates the guilt of all rather than their piety.

The heart (*καρδία*) functions as the "source of the instinctive feelings from which those impulses go forth which govern the exercise of the understanding and will."¹²¹ The heart instinctively responds to right and wrong, without reasoned consideration. Hodge forcefully states that Paul's aim was to:

. . . show that the heathen world have a rule of duty written on their hearts; a fact which is not proved by some heathen obeying the law, but which is proved by the moral conduct of all men. Men generally, not some men, but all men, show by their acts that they have a knowledge of right and wrong. The man who pays his debts, honors his parents, is kind to the poor, does the things of the law.¹²²

The heart is "that which is deepest and most determinative in their moral and spiritual being."¹²³

Furthermore, the conscience (*συνειδήσεως*) is "separated from the self and personified as a further witness standing over against it."¹²⁴ The conscience reflects and recognizes right from wrong. The conscience displays "co-knowledge, the knowledge or reflective judgment which a man has by the side of or in conjunction with the original consciousness of the act."¹²⁵ The

conscience then works in tandem with the works of the law written on the heart. Harrison notes, “The conscience operates through a process of accusation or defense by the thoughts of a man, the inner life being pictured as a kind of debating forum, so that at times he finds himself exonerated at the bar of conscience, at other times convicted of wrong.”¹²⁶

The role of the conscience in the first presentations of the gospel cannot be overemphasized. The conscience serves as an inner witness to the gospel message. Robert Priest posits that the content of the conscience corresponds with God’s own moral standards to the extent that it functions as God’s initial reference point in revealing our own moral failures and need of grace.¹²⁷ Culture influences consciences, but the works of the law written on the heart provide sufficient overlap between the unbeliever’s knowledge of morality and biblical morality to ensure that the gospel’s call to repentance is not without meaning. Priest posits the application of this truth by writing, “We must preach in such a way that native conscience functions as an independent inner witness to the truth of what is proclaimed about sinful selves. In this fashion conscience works with the missionary message.”¹²⁸

Acts 14 and 17

Two passages in Acts illustrate Paul’s use of general revelation in presenting the gospel. Acts 14:15-17 and 17:22-31 record Luke’s summary of Paul’s first two presentations of the gospel to non-Jewish people. Paul’s audiences consisted of people, “who, unlike the Gentiles that attended synagogue worship, had no acquaintance with the God of Israel or with Hebrew prophets.”¹²⁹ Thus these passages demonstrate the value of the point of contact concept for communicating the gospel among adherents of traditional religions today. Darrell Bock notes that Paul’s speech in Acts 17 “establishes a fundamental approach to the ‘religious’ world of those who do not know Jesus.”¹³⁰

In both of these passages, Paul engages his audience along three lines of argument that correspond to the three domains of general revelation discussed earlier. The first line of argument concerns God’s existence. The second argument relates to God’s attributes. The third argument deals with the third domain of general revelation, the knowledge of right and wrong enforced by the conscience. Space does not permit a full discussion concerning the entire context of each of these passages, nor the entire content of each witnessing encounter. The following discussion focuses only on those verses that illustrate Paul’s use of general revelation as points of contact.

Stott notes that Paul’s sermon in Acts 14:15-18 holds “great importance as his only recorded address to illiterate pagans.”¹³¹ Prior to the sermon, Paul and Barnabas gained an audience with the Lycaonians through the healing of a crippled man in Acts 14:8. The Lycaonians concluded from this that Paul and Barnabas were the gods Hermes and Zeus and therefore deserving of their worship. Paul’s response did not consist of an emotionless presentation of logic. In verse 14, prior to Paul’s presentation concerning the true God, both he and Barnabas had torn their clothes and run into the multitude to prevent the Lycaonians from worshipping them. The phrase “tore their clothes” (*δια__ήσσω*) expressed their horror as well as their “grief and pain at seeing or

hearing anything actually blasphemous or sacrilegious.”¹³² They “sprang forth” (ἐξέπηδισαν)¹³³ into the multitude to prevent the crowd from offering sacrifices to them.

Once among the pagan multitude, Paul and Barnabas showed respect to the Lycaonians when they asked “Sirs” (Ανδρες), which indicates an abrupt but courteous manner,¹³⁴ “why are you doing these things?”¹³⁵ They then sought to positively and sympathetically identify themselves with the humanity of the Lycaonians and thus deny any concept of their personal divinity.¹³⁶ Paul and Barnabas reject the Lycaonians’ misguided beliefs and actions, not the Lycaonians themselves. One can easily overlook this point, but it serves as an essential element in any attempt at gospel communication among traditional religious adherents. The missionary’s attitude towards non-Christians must remain respectful of the people, in spite of their religious beliefs and practices.

Only after this attempt at identification had been made, did Paul and Barnabas begin to present their argument about the only true God. Paul initiates his argument stating that the one true, living God exists and is knowable. Paul began by proclaiming that “God is One, the Almighty Creator.”¹³⁷ Paul uses *θε_ον*, without the article, because only one true God exists.¹³⁸ The true God did not equal the vain things or idols (ματαιών) the Lycaonians customarily revered as gods. Instead the true God is a living God, not a dead statue. The evidence for his living existence resides in the creation, “who made the heaven, the earth, the sea and things that are in them” (14:15d). Stott notes that in this verse, Paul “focused not on a Scripture they did not know, but on the natural world around them, which they did know and could see.”¹³⁹ Marion Soards contends, “The images of creation echo the universal character of the divinely achieved salvation to which the disciples are calling their hearers, and the images are a clear recognition of God’s authority as Creator.”¹⁴⁰ Paul seeks to establish first that only one true God exists, and as their Creator he, rather than vain idols, deserves their worship. Verse 16 reinforces that the God of Creation is eternal because he allowed bygone generations to walk in their ways.

Paul’s second line of argument focuses on God’s nature as demonstrated through his providential goodness. Paul reminds the Lycaonians that they have seen this living God through his acts of benevolence in nature. Burnside observes Paul’s reasoning to be that “God is true to Himself in nature.”¹⁴¹ God does not leave himself without witness anywhere in his Creation. In verse 17 Paul states that God has made himself known through “doing good” (ἀγαθοουργών) to the Lycaonians. Two parallel participles “giving you” (διδούς) and “filling” (ἐμπιπλών) elaborate how God did good to the Lycaonians. God gave rains and fruitful seasons, and God filled their hearts with food and gladness. All of these gifts of God bear witness to him. “In the bounty of nature there was testimony to both the being and the nature of God.”¹⁴² Though these verses do not *per se* present the gospel, Paul clearly outlines his purpose. He intends to persuade the Lycaonians that this good, caring, giving, living God desires to do even more good towards them in the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In summary, Paul’s approach to the Lycaonians illustrates three types of points of contact. First, by seeking to identify with the Lycaonians Paul validates Kraemer’s contention that the

missionary himself serves as a point of contact. Second, Paul uses creation as a point of contact to argue that God exists and is not inanimate. Third, Paul reminds the Lycaonians that throughout their history their material needs had been met through nature. Paul asserts that God used nature to meet their needs. He thus established God's benevolent character by using rain, food, and gladness of heart as points of contact which reflect God's attributes.

Acts 17:22-33 records Paul's other speech to non-Christians given at the Areopagus in Athens. Athens constituted the leading center of learning in Paul's day and served as the "native city of Socrates and Plato and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno."¹⁴³ An extraordinary number of idols occupied the city. A. T. Robertson notes Pliny's observation that in the time of Nero, Athens had over 30,000 public statues besides countless ones in the homes. Similarly, Petronius sneered that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens.¹⁴⁴

Luke records in verse 17, that this center of idolatry provoked (*παρωζύνητο*) Paul's spirit. *παρωζύνητο*, a strong word, can be translated enraged. Gaebelein notes that the Holy Spirit used this provocation to drive Paul to witness against the idolatry.¹⁴⁵ His form of witnessing though took into consideration the nature of his audience. In verse 17 Paul reasoned (*διελέγετο*) in the marketplace in a manner consistent with philosophical debate common in Athens. In verse 22, when Greek philosophers gave Paul the opportunity to defend his teaching about Jesus and the resurrection (17:18), he contextualized his speech so that he "comes to the Grecian philosophers as a philosopher."¹⁴⁶

Paul's manner of approach corresponds well with his audience. His audience at the Areopagus probably consisted of Epicureans, Stoics, representatives of other philosophies, followers of the traditional state religion, and perhaps even some who were not followers of any philosophy or religion.¹⁴⁷ Paul addressed his audience in forms and styles appropriate to the world of Greek philosophers. Simon Kistemaker argues that, "Paul addresses his audience with the same formula that had been used by the famous orator Demosthenes. With this address he touches the hearts of his hearers."¹⁴⁸

Paul's speech in Athens parallels his speech in Lystra. He exhibits the same respectful attitude towards the Athenians as he does to the Lycaonians, thereby making himself a point of contact. He also uses the same argument that creation demonstrates God's existence and uses this as a point of contact (vs 24). He continues by arguing in verse 25 that the Athenians also know of God's existence because he bears witness to himself as he "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (14:25).

Because of these similarities, the following discussion on Acts 17:22-32 does not address these points of contact again. Instead it focuses upon two other aspects of Paul's discourse to the Athenians. The first regards his use of existing religious beliefs as points of contact. The second relates to his appeal to the consciences of his hearers.

Paul begins his sermon to the Athenians by tactfully addressing the questions raised by the

Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in verse 18. Verse 18 records the philosophers' concerns that Paul illegally proclaimed a new religion consisting of the "foreign gods" (Ξένων δαιμονίων), Jesus (Ἰησοῦν) and Resurrection (ἀν_στασιν). Apparently the philosophers believed that ἀν_στασιν represented another deity on par with Jesus. Robertson notes that the "Athenians worshiped all sorts of abstract truths and virtues and they misunderstood Paul on this subject."¹⁴⁹

But Paul takes advantage of the existing beliefs of the Athenians by declaring that he knows the unknown god whom they worship without knowing. Paul says, "Therefore the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you. . . ." (17:23c). Paul uses the altar to the unknown god (Ἀγνώστ_θε_) as a point of contact with his audience. This point of contact benefits Paul's proclamation of the gospel in three ways.

First, he positively identifies with the Athenians by commenting on their uncommon religiosity (17:22). They were so religious they even built an altar to a deity of whom they had no knowledge (17:23b).

Secondly, he maintains that his preaching about Jesus Christ does not break the Roman law against proclaiming a new deity or religion. Instead, his message about Jesus Christ relates to their already existing belief in a god whom they refer to as the unknown god (17:23b).

Thirdly, this point of contact opens the door for Paul to address the real need of the Athenians, i.e. a true knowledge of God. Though unintentional, the Athenians had acknowledged their ignorance of the true God, by virtue of erecting an altar to the unknown god. Paul recognized in this inscription the deep, unsatisfied yearning of the Athenians for a true knowledge of and relationship with God. F. F. Bruce states, "Paul starts with his hearers' belief in an impersonal divine essence, pantheistically conceived, and leads them to the living God revealed as creator and judge."¹⁵⁰

Paul declares in Acts 17:23, "the One whom you worship without knowing Him I proclaim to you." Pluralists and inclusivists use this verse to claim that sincere worship in other religions equates to the worship of Jesus Christ. For example, Panikkar, in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* writes, "In the footsteps of St. Paul, we believe that we may speak not only of the unknown God of the Greeks but also of the hidden Christ of Hinduism."¹⁵¹ But this interpretation inaccurately interprets Paul's purpose. Paul focuses on the lack of knowledge among the Athenians rather than on their worship. Kistemaker summarizes Paul's purpose well when he writes, "Paul transfers the concept *unknown* from the deity to the worshipers. They worship without knowledge. . . . They concede that this unknown god exists, but they have no knowledge of him. Paul calls attention only to their lack of knowledge and thus takes the opportunity to introduce God as Creator and Judge of the universe."¹⁵²

Paul utilizes other points of contact later in his sermon. These points of contact reside in quotations of Greek philosophers. These quotations stem from the influence of the Old Testament revelation. R. C. Hanson following B. Gärtner writes that these quotations are not

reproductions of popular philosophy, but thoroughly traditional Old Testament or Jewish ideas which occasionally clothe themselves in Stoic expression.”¹⁵³ This writer concurs and believes that Paul used Stoic writings as points of contact because he saw enough similarity between these Stoic statements and Old Testament ideas to justify their use.

Space does not permit a full discussion of each allusion to or quotation from Greek philosophy in Paul’s sermon.¹⁵⁴ The significance to point of contact theory concerns the fact that Paul used existing beliefs of his audience to communicate effectively with first time hearers of the gospel. Bruce observes, “Paul here touches on issues not unfamiliar to cultured Athenians; he knows the importance of establishing as much initial common ground as possible with his hearers, as he tries to lead them on from the known to the unknown, or from error to truth.”¹⁵⁵ Green argues that verses 22-29 illustrate Paul’s use of “heathen poets to preach biblical doctrine.”¹⁵⁶ The specifically Christian content of the sermon begins in verse 30, “at the point where the hearers have been jolted into awareness of their moral responsibility to the creating, sustaining God.”¹⁵⁷

Paul uses these points of contact in his sermon to the Athenians as a *praeparatio evangelica*.¹⁵⁸ Aspects of truth from general revelation and the Old Testament influenced some Greek philosophers to the point that Paul could quote them to illustrate the fuller, revealed truth about Jesus Christ and the resurrection. Underlying Paul’s use of these points of contact was an assumption that the consciences of his audience enabled them to discern the moral accurateness of his arguments. Gooding illustrates this in reference to Paul’s quote from Aratus, “we are his offspring” (vs 28). Gooding states:

Aratus’ concept of God would have been pantheistic and therefore inadequate. But it served the point that Paul wanted to make. If as creatures we have sprung from a Creator, we can tell a great deal about our Creator from looking at ourselves. We human beings know ourselves to be personal: the Source we come from cannot be and is not less than personal. Our Creator, then, is not less personal than we are, but more.¹⁵⁹

Paul challenges his audience to rethink their moral attitude towards God. God was not an impersonal statue but a living God. Paul contends that truths from general revelation as well as statements by their own philosophers declare that their approach to God was morally wrong. Paul’s reasoning with the Athenians demonstrates the significant role of the unbeliever’s conscience in communicating the gospel effectively.

Conscience, as the arbiter of right and wrong, functions as a point of contact for the discerning missionary. As with the Athenians, present day cultures and worldviews influence the conscience, and possess discernable points of contact for the gospel. Paul did this with the Greek philosophers of his day and serves as a model for all cross-cultural missionaries today.

Historical Survey of Point of Contact

For centuries the Church has adapted in varying degrees, Paul’s evangelistic approach to the non-

Christians in Lystra and Athens. Lactantius illustrates a partial adaptation of Paul's model in the early fourth century. He contends:

Now the first step is to understand false religions, and to throw aside the impious worship of gods which are made by the hand of man. But the second step is to perceive with the mind that there is but one Supreme God, whose power and providence made the world from the beginning, and afterwards continues to govern it. The third step is to know his Servant and Messenger, whom He sent as His ambassador to the earth.¹⁶⁰

A clear progression exists in Lactantius' evangelistic approach. He moves the non-Christian from worship of false gods to the Creator God, appeals to the non-Christian's mind regarding the Creator God's power and providence as reflected through general revelation, and then presents Jesus Christ as God's messenger and servant.

Prior to Lactantius, physical and philosophical persecutions forced the early church to examine its beliefs, in order to defend itself so that it might survive and even win over its opponents. A crucial question in this effort concerned "the relationship between their faith and pagan culture."¹⁶¹ There was common agreement that they should not tolerate or indulge in the idolatrous practices of the non-Christian cultures surrounding them. Discontinuity between Christianity and other religions prevailed. The pluralist and inclusivist perspectives concerning the possibility of salvation in the non-Christian religions did not exist.

Justin Martyr, an apologist of the second century and one of the first Christian thinkers to attempt to reconcile reason and faith, uses Greek philosophy and reason in his apologetics. His apologetics assume a certain amount of continuity between Christianity and non-Christian belief systems. His writings illustrate an "early effort toward a synthesis of Christian and Hellenic thought. He saw the philosophers in partial possession of the seminal Logos that is wholly manifest only in Jesus Christ; and in Judaism also noted a truth needing and indeed essentially pointing to, completion in Christ."¹⁶²

Justin believes that whatever truth the Greek philosophers possess constitutes a dim reflection of Christian truth. Some historians contend Justin, in the *Apologies*, "anticipates Clement of Alexandria and the Alexandrian school by arguing that a '*spermatic logos*', identical with or related to Christ instructs every man in wisdom, so that even pagan philosophers foreshadowed Christian truth."¹⁶³

By using the concept of the *logos spermatikos* Justin sought to explain and enhance the attraction of Christianity for Greek-speaking intellectuals of the period. He willingly acknowledges anything good in paganism. Justin writes, "Christ is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus. . . ."¹⁶⁴

Green says Justin "did not make the mistake of thinking that the 'good' pagan did not need

converting.”¹⁶⁵ Instead Justin uses Greek philosophy, especially the doctrine of the Logos, as points of contact to his advantage in seeking to persuade men that Jesus Christ is the eternal Logos.

Clement of Alexandria adopts a similar position. His writings relate to the point of contact concept because he holds a “positive approach to philosophy which laid the foundations for the idea of philosophy as a ‘handmaid’ to theology.”¹⁶⁶

Clement represents the second century apologetic tradition of “evaluating Greek philosophy positively as providential *praeparatio evangelii* for Greeks.”¹⁶⁷ Clement follows Justin in asserting that whatever truth philosophers and prophets had before Christ, originated from the Word or Logos, and this Logos became incarnate in Jesus Christ. W. C. Weinrich explains Clement’s position:

The divine Logos, creator of all things, guides all good men and causes all right thought. *Greek philosophy was, therefore, a partial revelation and prepared the Greeks for Christ* just as the law prepared the Hebrews. Christ is the Logos incarnate through whom man attains to perfection and true *gnosis* (emphasis mine).¹⁶⁸

Clement liberally quotes Greek philosophers, prophets, and poets, to make his claim that the God of Christianity has made himself known to them.¹⁶⁹ Clement calls upon his audience to recognize that Jesus Christ is the God these philosophers sought to explain and he alone deserves their trust and belief.

The Greek fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, follow the example of Justin Martyr, and accept a greater degree of continuity between Christianity and non-Christian belief systems. However, the Latin fathers, such as Tertullian and Augustine emphasize discontinuity. Tertullian makes his position clear with his famous phrase, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?”¹⁷⁰

Augustine occasionally speaks approvingly of philosophy in contrast to the old gods.¹⁷¹ His *De Civitate Dei* demonstrates the “providential action of God in the development of human history”¹⁷² and could be used as points of contact.

Augustine strengthens the note of no compromise in the Church’s attitude towards the possibility of salvation in other faiths. His works combating Pelagian views, in which he argues that Pelagians resemble the Greek philosophers, and promise men fulfillment by their unaided efforts, illustrate his view of no compromise.¹⁷³

All of the early church leaders stress discontinuity between Christianity and non-Christian belief systems in regard to salvation. Despite the existence of various degrees of continuity, the phrase “no salvation outside the church” constitutes the common belief of the early church writers previously mentioned.

Protestant Reformation theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin focus more of their attention on distinguishing between the true church and the false church. Nevertheless, the reformers speak of common grace in addition to saving grace, “thereby attesting its belief that all people are inescapably related to the living God and all are therefore beneficiaries of his providential care.”¹⁷⁴ Likewise, common grace leads Reformed theologians to conclude that all people possess a knowledge of God’s wrath against their sin.

The Reformers do not devote their attention to the implications of common grace for the mission fields of the world. Clearly though, neither Luther nor Calvin allow for salvation apart from the special revelation of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures. Luther argues that “outside the Christian church, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness or no holiness.”¹⁷⁵ Calvin followed this position.

Reformed theologians understand general revelation in a manner that supports the point of contact concept. Calvin emphasizes the *sensus divinitatis* in all mankind. The *sensus divinitatis* consists of “an innate, intuitive perception in all people of the existence of the divine, which forms the basis for all religion and a natural theology.”¹⁷⁶ Calvin denies the possibility of this knowledge resulting in salvation, because the fallen nature of man corrupts this knowledge. Nevertheless, he maintains that it was “not to be controverted, that the human mind, even by natural instinct, possesses some sense of a Deity.”¹⁷⁷

For Calvin the sense of deity exists universally. He states, “Now, since there has never been a country or family, from the beginning of the world, totally destitute of religion, it is a tacit confession, that some sense of the Divinity is inscribed on every heart.”¹⁷⁸

Calvin also believes that God uses the conscience of every person to witness to Himself. “Our conscience does not allow us to sleep a perpetual insensible sleep without being an inner witness and monitor of what we owe God, without holding before us the difference between good and evil.”¹⁷⁹

Reformation theologians continue the line of discontinuity as seen among Tertullian and other early church leaders. Some argue that the entire Reformation movement constitutes a critique of all religions from the standpoint of the Gospel. Interpreting Karl Hartenstein’s position towards the Reformation, Gerold Schwarz writes:

Through the intensive concentration of the word of the Bible alone, the Reformation, for the first time in the history of the church, led to a theology of religion and the religions that was sharply distinct from the Christian philosophy of religion of the medieval Scholastics. For Hartenstein, the reformational contrast between *religio vera* (the theocentric form of religion of grace and salvation) and *religio falsa* (the anthropocentric form of religion of work-righteousness and self-redemption) remains fundamental to a theological interpretation of the religions.¹⁸⁰

Originally, point of contact theory developed in a theological context but eventually entered the missiological context as a solution to bridging the gap between non-Christian religions and Christianity. During the modern missions era,¹⁸¹ the variety of strategies for communicating the gospel among non-Christian peoples reflect interest in bridging this gap. Some of these strategies for introducing Christianity include Alan Tippett's "power encounter," Don Richardson's "redemptive analogies," Marvin Mayer's "bi-culturalism," Peter Beyerhaus' "*possessio*," and Charles Kraft's "dynamic equivalence."¹⁸² All of these strategies focus on finding the best method of bridging the tremendous religious and cultural gaps which exist between Christianity and other religions. Most significantly for this paper, they all view the non-Christian religions as potentially valuable in regard to containing elements conducive for communicating various aspects of Christianity.

These approaches may be classified as contextualization strategies. David Hesselgrave proposes that cross-cultural missions functions as an enterprise of bridge-building and risk-taking. He contends:

A number of terms and concepts relate to bridge-building in missions-identification, adaptation, accommodation, indigenization, inculturation, and dialogue, to name some of the major ones. (And various strategies have been proposed with a view to accomplishing this--using 'eye openers,' finding 'redemptive analogies,' and establishing 'common ground,' among others.) All of these terms have their own nuances, but the one term at one time or another has been applied to all of these and other bridge-building efforts is the new term 'contextualization.'¹⁸³

Hesselgrave correctly notes that contextualization encompasses point of contact strategy for cross-cultural missions. However, usage of the point of contact concept during the initial communication of the gospel, as proposed in this paper, represents only one aspect of the contextualization process.

Beyerhaus' "*possessio*" and Richardson's "redemptive analogies" approximate the point of contact concept as held by this author. Beyerhaus views mission as translation. He maintains that, "When the biblical message is transmitted into the realm of a different culture, this culture necessarily will have to provide the material elements in which it will be embodied."¹⁸⁴

Possessio consists of a three-step process: selection, rejection, and reinterpretation. In the selection step, the missionary adapts "phenomena of indigenous religion" as vehicles for translating the gospel message. During the rejection step, the missionary purifies the adapted cultural material to guard against their interpretation in the light of their former conception. The third step involves reinterpretation in which a complete change of the pre-Christian concepts occurs in order to reflect biblical meanings.

General revelation makes this three-step process possible. Beyerhaus wrote that "on account of

general revelation, non-Christian religion may contain some foreshadowings of that divine reality which is brought authentically in God's historic self-revelation."¹⁸⁵

Similarly, general revelation provides the basis for Don Richardson's redemptive analogies. Richardson writes, "Outside the Scripture, it appears that God's general revelation is the source of redemptive analogies worldwide."¹⁸⁶

Richardson's well-known experience among the Sawi in Irian Jaya thrust the concept of redemptive analogy onto the evangelical missionary scene in the early 1980s.¹⁸⁷ At first, Richardson proposed redemptive analogies as a strategy of concept fulfillment whereby those redeemed become aware of the spiritual meaning dormant within their own culture.¹⁸⁸ Later Richardson broadened the range of redemptive analogies to concepts that "facilitate human understanding of redemption."¹⁸⁹ God ordains these concepts to precondition the mind in a culturally significant way to recognize Jesus as Messiah.¹⁹⁰

Many missiologists freely interpret the redemptive analogy concept in their strategies for contextualizing the gospel among non-Christian peoples. Harold Dollar understands redemptive analogies as a matter of clothing the gospel. He argues, "To put it crudely, the gospel in its pure form is naked and the task of missions is to clothe it appropriately. For the Westerner these clothes may be a double-breasted suit and for the Motilone of South America these clothes may be a G-string."¹⁹¹ R. Daniel Shaw uses cultural analogies synonymously with redemptive analogies and views them both as keys which enable people to discover the truth about God within their context.¹⁹² Paul Hiebert refers to redemptive analogies as "practices that can be used to convey biblical truths by way of comparison."¹⁹³ David Hesselgrave likens Richardson's redemptive analogies to "entering wedges" for the gospel.¹⁹⁴

Richardson's redemptive analogy, when broadly defined as concepts that facilitate human understanding of redemption, fits well this paper's definition of points of contact--manifestations of general revelation that enhance communication of the gospel. Some scholars prefer Richardson's broader definition since redemptive analogies *per se* are not intrinsically salvific. "They are examples from ordinary human existence that the evangelist can use to establish contact with non-Christians and to illustrate important aspects of the gospel."¹⁹⁵

For this reason Kenneth Kantzer argues that Richardson's redemptive analogies such as the peace child are best termed points of contact. He contends that it is desirable to use the peace child as an instrument of communication and as a point of contact to introduce Christ.¹⁹⁶ This author concurs with Kantzer's appraisal.

Contemporary missiologists use a variety of terms to reference the point of contact concept. Such terms include bridges, human universals of culture, eye-openers, points of entry, starting points, contact points, and keys of common ground.¹⁹⁷ These also correspond well with the definition of point of contact as used in this paper.

Modern evangelical missiologists differ from Brunner in that they do not limit points of contact to only the sense of guilt in the sinner's conscience. Neither do they limit points of contact to Kraemer's contention that the missionary serves as the only point of contact. McGrath states that points of contact demonstrate occasional convergences of factual or cognitive knowledge of God.¹⁹⁸ Nida believes that points of contact denote parallelisms which provide one with an intelligible basis for communication.¹⁹⁹ Steyne argues that points of contact hold value because they help to highlight the motives and ways of dealing with felt needs.²⁰⁰ All of these reflect useful applications for the point of contact concept.

The point of contact concept continues to gain acceptance as an essential element in strategies designed for cross-cultural communication of the gospel.²⁰¹ These strategies focus on bridging the communicational gap between Christianity and the world religions by utilizing points of contact.

Charles Taber argues that the use of points of contact indicates that the process of contextualization is occurring. He states, "The sharper focus of good indigenization serves to heighten both the positive points of contact and the confrontation between Gospel and culture."²⁰²

This writer believes that in the future, points of contact will become an important strategy for contextualizing the gospel message during the initial communication process. Such strategies will not be limited to only the remote peoples and areas of the world. Instead these strategies will prove useful wherever the need exists for cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one cannot overemphasize the universal scope of general revelation, with its three domains of knowledge: God's existence, God's attributes, and God's morals. These three domains of general revelation are foundational for point of contact theory. All people possess some knowledge of God as a result of general revelation. Therefore, points of contact for communicating the gospel exist among all people.

Christianity has certain inherent analogies with other religious belief systems. These include the use of rituals, prayer, sacrifice, as well as concepts and words for God, sin, and salvation. These similarities offer significant points of contact for enhancing the initial communication of the gospel. Points of contact find expression within the context of an individual's worldview and cultural structures. It is important therefore to examine these areas in order to determine their role in communicating the gospel cross-culturally.

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¹E. C. Dewick, *The Gospel and Other Faiths* (London: The Canterbury Press, 1948), 92-102.

²Ajith Fernando, *The Christian's Attitude Toward World Religions* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1987), 19-27.

³Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985). Also, see Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 190-206, who posits six perspectives.

⁴Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, eds., *More Than One Way?: Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 14. See Hendrick Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938); John Nicol Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (London: Oxford, 1913); William Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions: A Layperson's Inquiry After 100 Years* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932).

⁵See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991); Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); J. Andrew Kirk, *Loosing the Chains: Religion as Opium and Liberation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992); Ken Gnanakan, *The Pluralist Predicament* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992); Kwame Bediako, "Kwame Bediako," in *The Unique Christ in Our Pluralist World*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

⁶Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982). Also see Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

⁷The definition of syncretism used throughout this dissertation is "the union of two opposite forces, beliefs, systems or tenets so that the united form is a new thing, neither one nor the other." Alan Tippett, "Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity," in *Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity?*, ed. Tetsunao Yamamori and Charles R. Taber (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1975), 17.

⁸Some representative extreme exclusivists include Ronald Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Ronald Nash, "Restrictivism," in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?*, ed. John Sanders (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995); Harold Lindsell, *A Christian Philosophy of Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1949).

⁹The term "Split-level Christianity" was posited by Jaime Bulato in *Phenomena and Their Interpretation: Landmark Essays 1957-1989* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 1962). Bulato's "split-level Christianity" is synonymous with "two-tier Christianity," the term used in Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 15 ff.

¹⁰E. Luther Copeland, *A New Meeting of the Religions: Interreligious Relationships and Theological Questioning* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1999), 8. He proposes nine new categories: negativism, dialecticism, confessionalism, Christocentric pluralism, theocentric pluralism, regnocentric pluralism, paradoxical pluralism, non-relativistic pluralism, and pre-eschatological agnosticism.

¹¹Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997).

¹²Copeland, 32.

¹³For a discussion of the relationship between the *imago Dei* and points of contact, see Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, *The God Who Speaks and Shows: Some Preliminary Considerations* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 395-409.

¹⁴These three domains are nature, conscience, and history. These will be further explained later in this paper.

¹⁵Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 12.

¹⁶Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), 214.

¹⁷Donald Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 153.

¹⁸Emil Brunner, "Nature and Grace," in *Natural Theology*, ed. John Baillie, trans. Peter Fraenkel, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), 59-60.

¹⁹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 265.

²⁰Carl F. Hallencreutz, *Kraemer Towards Tambaram: A Study in Hendrik Kraemer's Missionary Approach* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1966), 300.

²¹The major international missionary conferences prior to the Jerusalem Conference in 1928, maintained a biblical continuity-discontinuity position in regards to missionary methodology among non-Christian religions. Richard Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho, 1989), 265-9.

²²The following summary of these two concepts is based upon Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith*, rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1990), 15-20.

²³*Ibid.*, 16.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 17.

²⁵Lesslie Newbigin, "The Gospel Among the Religions," in *Missions Trends No. 5: Faith Meets Faith*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 7.

²⁶Charles Van Engen, "Reflecting Theologically About the Resistant," in *Reaching the Resistant: Barriers and Bridges for Mission*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1998), 42.

²⁷Some evangelical missiologists use common ground today. However, unlike the ecumenicals, they emphasize the importance of commonality between missionary and non-Christian rather than commonality between Christian beliefs and other non-Christian beliefs. See Robert Don Hughes, "Cross Cultural Communication," in *Missiology*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 278-81. Hughes states, "Common ground is the pathway of communication. You must share something in common with another person--a common language, a common interest, a common concern, a common need, a common value--in order to have a bridge between you."

²⁸Nida, *Message and Mission*, 18.

²⁹Eugene A. Nida, *Customs, Culture and Christianity* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1954), 261.

³⁰Hendrick Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1938).

³¹Kraemer does not use the term “general revelation.” Instead he uses “natural theology.” These terms are discussed further in the section below on discontinuity.

³²Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, 140.

³³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press), footnote 6, 121-2.

³⁴See, Don Richardson’s use of redemptive analogies in *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal 1981). Contemporary usage of this concept is discussed later in this paper.

³⁵Grudem, 121.

³⁶World Missionary Conference, *The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions*, Report of Commission 4 (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 22.

³⁷Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2d ed. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986), 13.

³⁸Gehman, 245.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 262.

⁴⁰Gerald Anderson, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” in *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*.

⁴¹J. H. van Veen, *Nathan Söderblom, Leven en Denken van een Godsdiensthistoricus*, (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1940), 226; quoted in C.J. Bleeker, *Christ in Modern Athens: The Confrontation of Christianity with Modern Culture and the Non-Christian Religions* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1965), 109.

⁴²See John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987); John Hick, *God Has Many Names*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981); Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions*.

⁴³See Clark Pinnock, “Acts 4:12--No Other Name Under Heaven,” in *Through No Fault of Their Own?*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Clark Pinnock, “Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990): 359-68; Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*; Karl Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” in *Christianity and Other Religions*, ed. John Hick and Brian Hebbelthwaite (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 52-79; John E. Sanders, “Is Belief in Christ Necessary for Salvation?,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 60 (1988): 241-59; Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981).

⁴⁴Rahner, 61.

⁴⁵Ebbie Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 419-22.

⁴⁶Also see Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*

(New York: Friendship Press, 1954); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: William, 1986); Carl E. Braaten, "Who Do We Say That He Is? On the Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1980); John Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988).

⁴⁷Alister E. McGrath, "A Particularist View: A Post-Enlightenment Approach," in *More Than One Way?: Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 179.

⁴⁸"The pluralist alternative to Christian mission assumes that any activities that cannot be shared by people of all faiths and by other people of goodwill should not be undertaken by the church." J. Andrew Kirk, *The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1997), 44-5.

⁴⁹J. I. Packer, "'Good Pagans' and God's Kingdom," *Christianity Today* (17 January 1986): 25.

⁵⁰Gehman, 251.

⁵¹James F. Lewis, "Christianity and the Religions in the History of the Church," in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, ed. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 160.

⁵²"The study of comparative religions and the science and philosophy of religion tended with many to create the idea that religion is a universal and essentially identical thing always and everywhere, and that each historic religion, Christianity included, is only a branch of a common trunk." Robert E. Speer, *The Finality of Jesus Christ* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1933), 170.

⁵³Natural theology is "the body of knowledge about God which may be obtained by human reason alone without the aid of revelation." E. A. Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 122.

⁵⁴G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 22ff. General revelation refers to "the knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law, which comes through creation to all humanity." Grudem, 122.

⁵⁵Karl Barth, "The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion," in *Christianity and Other Religions*, ed. John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 32.

⁵⁶Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1, pt. 2, (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G., 1948), 356.

⁵⁷Bengt Sundkler, *The World of Mission* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963), 53.

⁵⁸Emil Brunner, "Nature and Grace," 31.

⁵⁹See Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions*; William E. Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1940).

⁶⁰Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, 199.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 252.

⁶²See Lindsell, *A Christian Philosophy of Mission*; Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*; Nash "Restrictivism."

⁶³Ebbie Smith, "Contemporary Theology of Missions," 432.

⁶⁴Fernando, 23.

⁶⁵John Hick, "Response to R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips," in *More Than One Way?: Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 250.

⁶⁶Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 34. Also see Charles Van Engen, "The Uniqueness of Christ in Mission Theology," in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, ed. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 186-7. Van Engen describes this problem further and explains how pluralists and inclusivists make three types of unfavorable comparisons to the exclusivist position.

⁶⁷Gordon T. Smith, "Religions and the Bible: An Agenda for Evangelicals," in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, ed. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 18.

⁶⁸Carl F. H. Henry, "Is It Fair?," in *Through No Fault of Their Own?*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 250.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁰These three domains are taken from Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 157; Carl F. H. Henry, "Special Revelation," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*; and Grudem, 122-3.

⁷¹Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 1:408.

⁷²Some who hold to a biblical continuity-discontinuity position maintain that salvation can occur through general revelation. The individuals saved by this means are extremely few in number but, nevertheless, it remains a possibility. For further discussion, see J. N. D. Anderson, *Christianity and Comparative Religion*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), 100-7; Packer, 22-5; Millard Erickson, "Hope for Those Who Haven't Heard? Yes But . . .," *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (April 1975): 122-6; A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1979), 843; Alister McGrath, "A Particularist View," 151-80.

⁷³Millard J. Erickson, "The State of the Unevangelized and Its Missionary Implications," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 163.

⁷⁴Bruce Demarest and Richard Harpel, "Don Richardson's 'Redemptive Analogies' and the Biblical Idea of Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146, no. 583 (July-September 1989): 333-4.

⁷⁵Enns, 156.

⁷⁶See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 175-203; Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1968), 76-81; William B. Nelson, "Revelation," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*.

⁷⁷Carl F. H. Henry, "Special Revelation," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.

⁷⁸Grudem, 123.

⁷⁹David K. Clark, "Is Special Revelation Necessary for Salvation?," in *Through No Fault of Their Own?*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 37.

⁸⁰*Ibid.* Clark argues that relativism is the most extreme form of continuity. He contends that it

is the relativists who “believe in no exclusive truth and who occupy the farthest pole from exclusivism.” Relativism argues that “we simply have no way to decide matters of religious ‘truth.’”

⁸¹The use of “preparatory” is not intended to reflect the meaning of its usage as defined at the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 and the vast amount of subsequent literature advocating that position. At the Edinburgh Conference “preparatory” meant that other religions served as a preparation for Christ in the sense that the gospel fulfills them. See Newbigin, “The Gospel Among the Religions,” 3-19.

⁸²Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 250-1.

⁸³J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997), 185.

⁸⁴Alan R. Tippett, “Possessing the Philosophy of Animism for Christ,” in *Crucial Issues in Missions Tomorrow*, ed. Donald McGavran (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 132.

⁸⁵Cyril C. Okorochoa, *The Meaning of Conversion in Africa: The Case of the Igbo of Nigeria* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987), 217.

⁸⁶See also E. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips, “A Particularist View: An Evidentialist Approach,” in *More Than One Way?: Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); John P. Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989); James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 1 (North Richland Hills, TX: Bibal Press, 2000). These authors similarly integrate continuity with discontinuity. They contend salvation comes through explicit faith in Christ. They argue that existing non-Christian religions do have value and should not be discarded as totally evil.

⁸⁷John R. Stott, *Understanding the Bible* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1972), 33.

⁸⁸Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3, *The Epistles of Paul* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 10-2.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

⁹¹Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 92.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 97.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 92.

⁹⁴A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4, *The Epistles of Paul* (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 328.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶Aída Besancon Spencer, “Romans 1: Finding God in Creation,” in *Through No Fault of Their Own?*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 127.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 135.

⁹⁸John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 37-8.

⁹⁹Frederick Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 103.

¹⁰⁰Murray, 38.

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- ¹⁰¹H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, ed. J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1896), 60.
- ¹⁰²Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Evansville, IN: Puritan Classics, 1958), 58.
- ¹⁰³John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 70.
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- ¹⁰⁵Murray, 38.
- ¹⁰⁶Godet, 103.
- ¹⁰⁷Murray, 39.
- ¹⁰⁸John Parry, ed., *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1912), 45.
- ¹⁰⁹Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical: Romans, PC Study Bible: Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database [CD-ROM]*(Seattle, WA: BibleSoft 1997), Rom 1:20.
- ¹¹⁰Robertson, 3:329.
- ¹¹¹Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), 8.
- ¹¹²Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 37.
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- ¹¹⁴Haldane, 59.
- ¹¹⁵Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 70.
- ¹¹⁶*Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁷*Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁸Moo, 150.
- ¹¹⁹Murray, 75.
- ¹²⁰Godet, 123.
- ¹²¹*Ibid.*, 124.
- ¹²²Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, 55.
- ¹²³Murray, 75.
- ¹²⁴W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament*, ed. Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles, and Alfred Plummer (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 60.
- ¹²⁵*Ibid.*
- ¹²⁶Harrison, *Romans*, 31-2.
- ¹²⁷Robert J. Priest, "Missionary Elenctics: Conscience and Culture," *Missiology: An International Review* 22, no. 3 (July 1994): 298.
- ¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 310.
- ¹²⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 276.

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- ¹³¹John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 231.
- ¹³²R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), 569.
- ¹³³Vincent, 1:522.
- ¹³⁴Robertson, 3:211.
- ¹³⁵Acts 14:15.
- ¹³⁶Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 199.
- ¹³⁷W. F. Burnside, ed., *The Acts of the Apostles*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1916), 168.
- ¹³⁸Lenski, 571.
- ¹³⁹Stott, *The Spirit, the Church and the World*, 232.
- ¹⁴⁰Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1994), 89.
- ¹⁴¹Burnside, 169.
- ¹⁴²C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, ed. Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles, and Alfred Plummer (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 682.
- ¹⁴³F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 375.
- ¹⁴⁴Robertson, 3:278.
- ¹⁴⁵A. C. Gaebelien, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Our Hope, 1912), 303.
- ¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 305.
- ¹⁴⁷For a helpful description of Paul's audience at the Areopagus, see David Gooding, *True to the Faith: A Fresh Approach to the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 293-300.
- ¹⁴⁸Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 631.
- ¹⁴⁹Robertson, 3:282.
- ¹⁵⁰Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text*, 381.
- ¹⁵¹Panikkar, 137.
- ¹⁵²Kistemaker, 632.
- ¹⁵³R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts*, The New Clarendon Bible, ed. H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 177-8.
- ¹⁵⁴For introductory remarks and an extensive bibliography, see Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text*, 378-87. For a helpful discussion entitled "The Culpability of Pagan Ignorance of God" see Gooding, *True to the Faith*, 305-13.
- ¹⁵⁵Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text*, 382.
- ¹⁵⁶Green, 128.
- ¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸McKim, 218, defines this as “a term used to describe the work of God in preparing the world for the coming of Jesus Christ.”

¹⁵⁹Gooding, 311-2.

¹⁶⁰Lactantius, *A Treatise on the Anger of God, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, authorized edition, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 259.

¹⁶¹Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 53.

¹⁶²R. B. Eno, “Justin Martyr,” in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*.

¹⁶³William Frend and Mark Edwards, “Justin Martyr,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

¹⁶⁴Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin Martyr, The Ages Digital Library Collections: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages Software Ver. 2.0, 1997), 326.

¹⁶⁵Green, 157.

¹⁶⁶W. C. Weinrich, “Clement of Alexandria,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.

¹⁶⁷B.D. “Clement of Alexandria,” in *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*.

¹⁶⁸Weinrich, “Clement of Alexandria.”

¹⁶⁹The progression of Clement’s argument resembles Paul’s sermon in Athens. He argues that the true God makes himself known throughout history in acts of benevolence to all people. But people turn away from the true God and make gods of their own. He quotes the Sibyl prophetess to buttress his argument. He calls upon Plato to support his argument about the true God. Clement quotes Sophocles as a poet who bears testimony to the truth. Then Clement follows Paul’s example in Acts 17 and turns to the Scriptures to close his arguments. He states the difference between the oracles of philosophers and poets with the revelation of Scripture. See Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen, The Ages Digital Library Collections: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages Software Ver. 2.0, 1997), chapters 6 and 7.

¹⁷⁰Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics, The Ages Digital Library Collections: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages Software Ver. 2.0, 1997), 443.

¹⁷¹Augustine, *The City of God, The Ages Digital Library Collections: The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages Software Ver. 2.0, 1997), 281. Augustine argues that the philosopher Varro “seems in some fashion to at least acknowledge one God.”

¹⁷²Larry Hainsworth, “Augustine,” in *A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*.

¹⁷³John F. Mathews, “Augustine, St.” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

¹⁷⁴Donald G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 65.

¹⁷⁵Philip E. Pederson, ed. *What Does This Mean? Luther’s Catechisms Today* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), 124.

¹⁷⁶McKim, 255.

¹⁷⁷John Calvin, *A Compendium of the Institutes of the Christian Religion* ed. Hugh T. Kerr (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 7.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹William F. Keesecker, ed. *A Calvin Treasury: Selections from Institutes of the Christian Religion* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 21.

¹⁸⁰Gerold Schwarz, "Karl Hartenstein 1894-1952: Missions with a Focus on 'The End,'" in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and others (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 597.

¹⁸¹Generally scholars regard the modern missions era as beginning with William Carey's treatise of 1792, "An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens" and extending into the twenty-first century. See Ralph Winter, "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 253-61; and Justice Anderson, "The Great Century and Beyond," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 199-218.

¹⁸²See Alan Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity* (Pasadena: CA William Carey Library, 1967); Alan Tippett, "The Meaning of Meaning," in *Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity?*, ed. Tetsunao Yamamori and Charles R. Taber (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1975); Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1974); Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981); Don Richardson, "Redemptive Analogies," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 3d ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 397; Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Crosscultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974); Peter Beyerhaus, "Possessio and Syncretism in Biblical Perspective," in *Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity?* ed. Tetsunao Yamamori and Charles R. Taber (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1975); Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979); Ebbie Smith and Carlos Martin, "Strategies for Introducing Christianity," in *That All the World May Hear*, ed. Ebbie Smith (Fort Worth, n. p., 1991).

¹⁸³David Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Missions* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1988), 151.

¹⁸⁴Beyerhaus, "Possessio and Syncretism," 135.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 137.

¹⁸⁶Richardson, "Redemptive Analogies," 397.

¹⁸⁷See Richardson, *Peace Child*, and Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts*.

¹⁸⁸Don Richardson, "Concept Fulfillment," *Moody Monthly* 9 (1976): 54.

¹⁸⁹Richardson, "Redemptive Analogies," 397.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Harold Dollar, *St. Luke's Missiology: A Cross-Cultural Challenge* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1996), 89.

¹⁹²R. Daniel Shaw, *Transculturation: The Cultural Factor in Translation and Other Communication Tasks* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1988), 15.

¹⁹³Hiebert and Meneses, 148.

¹⁹⁴David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 152.

¹⁹⁵Demarest and Harpel, 337.

¹⁹⁶Kenneth S. Kantzer, "A Theological Brief," in *Philosophy of Religion and Theology: 1976 Proceedings of the American Academy of Religion*, comp. Peter Slater (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 186.

¹⁹⁷Hiebert and Meneses, 148; A. Scott Moreau, "The Human Universals of Culture: Implications for Contextualization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12 (July-September 1995): 122-5; Don Richardson, "Finding the Eye Opener," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 421-7; David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 233; Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 241ff.; David Burnett, *Clash of Worlds* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 244ff; Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 284; David J. Phillips, "The Need for a Nomadic Theology," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 17 (Summer 2000): 26.

¹⁹⁸McGrath, "A Particularist View," 165.

¹⁹⁹Nida, *Message and Mission*, 18.

²⁰⁰Philip M. Steyne, *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists* (Houston: Touch Publications, 1989), 248.

²⁰¹See Kenneth D. Bolden, "The Relevance of Covenant Concept in Developing a Strategy for Christian Ministry Among the Luo People of Kenya" (M.A. thesis, Wheaton Graduate School, 1994); Martin Schroder, "Nyakibel Nyakoit: A Redemptive Analogy for the Toposa," *Hundredfold* 8 (July-December 1993); W. Douglas Smith, "Melchizedek and Abraham Walk Together in World Mission," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13 (January-March 1996); Joy Anderson, "Behold! The Ox of God," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1998); Doug Priest Jr., *Doing Theology with the Massai* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1990).

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