

**H. RICHARD NIEBUHR'S RADICAL MONOTHEISM
AS A "WORLD THEOLOGY"**

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Despite widespread acceptance of philosophical relativism and religious pluralism, there is new philosophical and theological interest in the possibilities of a "global philosophy" or a "world theology." This interest is fueled more by practical than by theoretical concern. After all, different culturally focused perceptions of the world lead to different morally defined arrangements of the world. Benign tolerance of radically different construals of reality may be possible in a prosperous and peaceful world. But such disagreements are risky in a world troubled by global competition for scarce resources and by global capabilities of nuclear destruction. The very survival of the planet seems to depend on our ability to build a stable world community. And that ability in turn seems to require some system of shared beliefs and values.

For theologians if not philosophers, the practical urgency for a unifying ideology are reinforced by theoretical demands as well. All the great world religions embrace a unitary view of ultimate reality and a unifying vision of human community. Yet such claims for one center and circle of faith stand in sharp contrast to the manifest variety of the religious traditions themselves. Of course, if only one of the traditions is true, then religious diversity raises strategic rather than substantive problems. The rival forms of faith are simply manifestations of error and candidates for conversion. But religious diversity raises unavoidable theological questions if other traditions are somehow judged to be authentic carriers of faith. Why is the sacred revealed in such radically divergent ways? How can believers come together across such radically divergent paths? Questions like these force themselves on the serious theologian precisely to the degree that religious pluralism is taken seriously.

A number of contemporary Christian thinkers are taking up these questions in pursuit of a unifying faith and theology. But none has thought more clearly and consistently about faith's unity and diversity than H. Richard Niebuhr. Of course, Niebuhr would never have thought of his work as a "world theology." Indeed, he remained suspicious of any claim to speak for anyone beyond the standpoint of a particular religious community with its particular religious symbols. But his distinctive way of combining radical monotheism

and historical relativism points the way theologically for affirming while transcending religious pluralism.

I. WAYS TO A WORLD THEOLOGY

The question of the unity and the diversity of the religions is not a modern problem. Certainly the Church has theorized about the relationship between the Christian and the non-Christian faiths throughout its history. Christianity itself came to birth in the milieu of other religions from which it freely borrowed and against which it strongly competed. But this encounter has been greatly broadened and intensified in the modern era. Increased mobility has shattered the geographical and historical separation of the religions as men and women of different faiths and cultures have increasingly come in contact with one another. At the academic level, a wealth of historical and comparative knowledge of the religions has become available over the last two centuries of scholarly research. Finally, a new missionary aggressiveness among the old and the new religions has sharpened public awareness of the variety of religious options in the modern world. For these reasons, questions about the unity and diversity of the religions have taken on a new urgency in our time.

Accompanying the growing awareness of religious pluralism as a theological problem has been a burgeoning literature dealing with the subject. What began as a marginal concern of philosophers of religion in the early decades of this century has become the central problem of dogmatic theologians in recent years. Needless to say, no consensus has emerged in the discussion to date. But there is growing agreement about the range of ways to a world theology that are worth pursuing.

A variety of more or less complicated schemes for classifying the different ways of approaching and overcoming religious pluralism have been proposed in this century. For example, William Earnest Hocking presented a simple threefold pattern of Displacement, Synthesis and Reconception in his Living Religions and a World Faith. <2> Owen C. Thomas in Attitudes Toward Other Religions classified the Christian response to religious pluralism under ten headings -- Rationalism, Romanticism, Exclusivism, Dialectic, Reconception, Tolerance, Dialogue, Catholicism and Presence. <3> Raymond Panikkar in his The Intrareligious Dialogue discerns three possible attitudes in the meeting of the religious traditions and three distinctive models for the unity and diversity of those traditions -- the attitudes of Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Parallelism and the models of color refraction, geometric shape and linguistic system. <4> But all these schemes suffer from two shortcomings. They offer too static a view of the religious traditions and too narrow a picture of interfaith dialogue. They are, in short, overly persuasive and underly pluralistic. Therefore, I suggest a somewhat more dynamic and expansive scheme for sorting out alternative ways to a world faith. <5>

1. The Way of Normative Displacement

The way of normative displacement claims authority and finality for one religious tradition above and beyond all others. This approach to rival religions has been the predominant attitude among all religions prior to the modern era, not simply among the great missionary religions of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. In fact, the notion that one's own religion is the only true religion is deeply rooted in the tribal religious experience which underlies the great historic faiths. <6> Such folk religions identified the limits of the human and the divine with their own geographical and cultural boundaries. Those gods and persons who lived beyond these boundaries were neither truly divine nor fully human. The great historic faiths overcame the geographic and ethnic narrowness of tribal religion. But for the most part they each retained the conviction that their own religion contains the final truth about the universe and offers the only way of salvation. Their own religion was destined to displace all rival pretenders to absolute truth and eternal life.

The way of normative displacement may take either an aggressive or an irenic approach to other religions. An exclusivist approach claims a virtual monopoly on religious truth and grace for one's own religion. This conviction need not require the categorical condemnation of the religious beliefs and practices of others, but it often does. In its most extreme form, an exclusivist version of normative displacement can promote intolerance or even persecution of other religions. But, in modern societies, the exclusivist approach to other religions usually limits itself to aggressive evangelism or dogmatic theology. <7> By contrast, an inclusivist approach readily acknowledges that truth and grace can be found in other religions. But the spiritual depth and power manifested in them falls short of the saving knowledge and techniques available only in one's own religion. The inclusivist attitude has a quality of magnanimity and openness toward other religions. It may even incorporate certain of the interpretive categories and spiritual disciplines of other religions into its own beliefs and practices. But the partial understanding and holiness found in other religions must be corrected and completed by the truth and grace found only in the highest religion. <8>

2. The Way of Reductive Synthesis

Contrary to the approach of normative displacement, the way of reductive synthesis rests on the assumption that all religions contain an identical core of truth and grace. This underlying unity has been obscured for thousands of years by the conflicting truth claims and ritual performances of different religions. But there is a "religious essence" which is expressed more or less clearly in the culturally conditioned teachings and rituals of each and every religion. Ultimately every religion rests on a common faith. Disagreements prevail over whether this common faith is a set of beliefs or a way of life. Further disagreements arise over whether this common faith is

uncovered through scholarly research or through religious insight. But beyond these disagreements lies the firm conviction that religion is one in essence though its manifestations are many.

These efforts to reduce the diverse manifestations of religion to their underlying essence differ over the fate of the manifestations themselves. <9> On one reckoning, the different systems of religious belief and practice can pretty much remain in place once their common denominator has been established. Like different styles of dress from one culture to another, different ways of articulating and celebrating faith are reflections of personal taste and ethnic heritage. But they no longer represent the rival apprehensions of reality the religions once professed. A less benign program of reductive synthesis seeks to strip away all accidental and variable accretions of the religious life. Diverse cultural manifestations of religion are still too easily confused with the essence of religion to allow them to stand side by side. The great cultural expressions of religion must be gradually dismantled if a genuine world faith is to emerge.

3. The Way of Inclusive Reconciliation

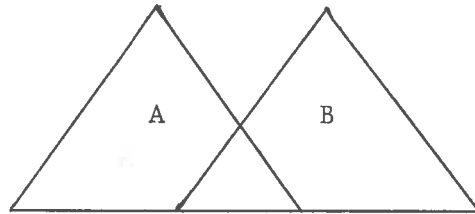
The first two ways to a world theology described above share a fundamental conviction. Their efforts to displace other religions by a particular faith or to synthesize all religions into a common faith agree that religion's inalienable truth can be fully known and experienced. They simply disagree over where and how that final truth can be found. The way of displacement locates it in one religion's normative tradition. The way of synthesis discovers it in every religion's underlying essence. By contrast, the way of inclusive reconciliation insists that no religion be regarded as complete, whether in essence or in manifestation. The diversity of the world's religious quest and commitment mirrors the fact that no religion has a final monopoly or even a fixed core of truth. Religions undergo a continuous process of adaptation and alteration in response to changing circumstance and knowledge. Religions are constantly reconceived as their underlying cultural assumptions or religious intuitions change.

This affirmation of a genuine religious pluralism opens the door to a new kind of encounter between the religions. <10> No longer need interreligious dialogue be a covert strategy for conversion or an overt program for merger. Rather, out of a real encounter with men and women of other religions, believers are compelled to reconsider their own tradition as well as the traditions of others. The diverse patterns of belief and experience available in the many religions open each religion to a wider and deeper grasp of divine and human reality. Indeed, such efforts at mutual understanding pave the way toward a world faith as each tradition reconceives itself in the light of insights and interests which are only fully available within other traditions.

Here then are three distinguishable patterns in the quest for a world faith. Following Hocking's example, the relation between the three methods

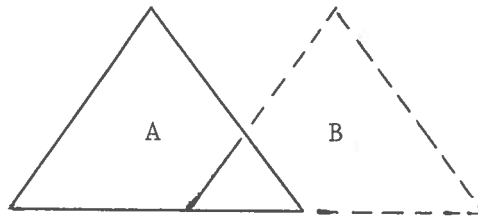
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may be clarified by a series of diagrams. <11> Needless to say, the number of participants and complexities of relationships within these patterns are greatly simplified in the following figures.



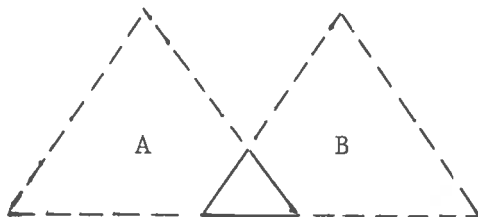
Religion A and Religion B have emerged as different culturally-focused apprehensions of the divine and human reality, which stand in conflict with one another despite some shared religious forms and functions.

1.
Normative Displacement



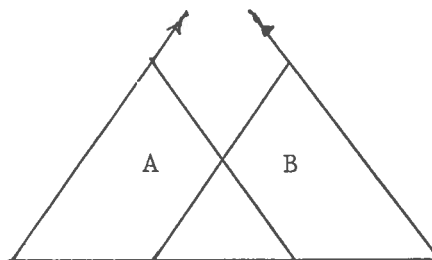
Religion A displaces Religion B, excluding all of Religion B except what it shares in common with Religion A's apprehension of the divine and human reality.

2.
Reductive Synthesis



Religion A and Religion B discard their religious and cultural particularities, reducing themselves to the underlying apprehension of the divine and human reality common all religions.

3.
Inclusive Reconciliation



Building on their shared religions forms and functions, Religion A and Religion B extend and transcend themselves by learning from one another and by reaching beyond each other toward a more inclusive apprehension of the divine and human reality.

While each pattern seeks to overcome the world's religious diversity, only the way of Reconciliation represents a positive approach to religious pluralism. The way of Synthesis certainly goes beyond the dogmatism and parochialism of the way of Displacement. Yet the move toward synthesis finally does not recognize different religions as distinctive and irreducible forms of religious experience and belief. Rather, the way of Synthesis sacrifices precisely what is distinctive within the different traditions in order to arrive at some universal religious essence. Only the way of Reconciliation seeks to unify the religions without designating one of them as the final religion or collapsing all of them into a generalized religiosity.

This is not the place to argue the necessity of choosing the way of Reconciliation over the ways of Displacement and Synthesis. Of course, that case turns on the acceptance of religious pluralism as the new "fact" of the modern era. The religions of earlier periods of human history were certainly aware of rival religions and they developed practical and theoretical strategies for neutralizing their divisiveness. For centuries, the way of Displacement was the solution of choice to the problems of a religiously plural world. The way of Synthesis arose during the Renaissance as an alternative method for reducing the religious strife that divided the world. But both the way of Displacement and the way of Synthesis predated the rise of modern historical consciousness, with its recognition of every religion's cultural particularity and relativity. Therefore neither way is prepared to acknowledge that rival religions can contain authentic though distinctive apprehensions of the divine and human reality. Only the way of Reconciliation recognizes religious pluralism as both the primary obstacle and the historic opportunity for the emergence of a world theology.

II. ELEMENTS OF A WORLD THEOLOGY

For those committed to the way of Reconciliation, the substance of a world theology is anything but clear. Indeed, the patterns of experience and knowledge that will be expressed in that kind of theology will only emerge as the religions encounter one another in mutual dialogue and discovery. But the shape of a world theology can already be discerned in the work of those thinkers who are seriously engaging religious pluralism. The very possibility of mutual dialogue and discovery among the religions rests on three assumptions. (1) The possibility of one religion understanding the distinctive truths of a different religion assumes that religions are functionally similar. Though the answers offered by diverse religions vary greatly, the questions they address are very much the same. All religions seek to provide answers to fundamental questions of human meaning and value in a strange and threatening world. (2) The possibility of one religion affirming the distinctive truths of a different religion assumes that religions are culturally validated. Every culture develops its own distinctive patterns of belief and behavior and embodies these patterns in distinctive political and economic, scientific and religious symbol systems. To the extent that a given culture's religious system works, it bears some positive relation to the divine and human reality. (3) The possibility of one religion incorporating the distinctive truths of a different religion assumes that religions are historically revisable. Religions are not static systems of belief and behavior. They survive as vital cultural systems and personal orientations by adapting and changing in the light of new circumstances and new knowledge.

Fortunately, we do not have to speculate about how these three assumptions might look in a theological system. They have been made explicit in the thought of H. Richard Niebuhr. <12> To be sure, Niebuhr expresses these convictions in the language and lineaments of a Christian theology. His thought takes its rise from the revelation of ultimate reality and everyday existence given in and through Jesus Christ. But in Niebuhr's hands that very revelation requires the Christian community to look and reach beyond its own historical experience and understanding of the divine and human reality. Thus Niebuhr's interpretation of the deformation, incarnation and extension of faith provides a distinctively Christian appraisal of the central elements of a world theology.

1. The Deformation of Faith

Describing human life in its all its cultural manifestations and general structures, Niebuhr contends that faith is given with human life itself. "As long as a man lives he must believe in something for the sake of which he lives; without belief in something that makes life worth living man cannot exist." <13> More precisely, Niebuhr defines faith as a triadic structure of trust-loyalty relationships.

In analyzing the structure or nature faith in this sense we are involved in the examination of a dynamic interpersonal process in which there are not two terms simply, but three -- the self, the other, and the cause; and in which there is not one response (that of trust in the faithful, for instance) that maintains the structure, but two responses are called for, trust and loyalty; and these two responses move in two directions -- toward the other and toward the common cause. <14>

Niebuhr may focus attention on selected aspects of this dynamic triad for purposes of emphasis. He sometimes analyzes the trust-loyalty relationship between two persons. <15> At other times he describes the truth-loyalty relationship between persons and their center of value. <16> But Niebuhr holds these elements together in a living triad of reciprocal relationships between persons and their shared cause. <17>

All three terms of the triad of faith (the self, the other, and the cause) are involved in all the expressions of faith, but the determinative factor is the cause. <18> This "terminal" of the triad of faith determines the quality and the scope of relationships within the triad. Although life is always lived amid competing causes, one or more of these is always preeminent. That preeminent cause functions as the ground of personal and social existence since it is the source from which all worth is derived and all duty is determined. Expressed in religious terms, these absolutized causes function as god or gods, since they establish life's value and determine life's duty.

We arrive, then, at the problem of deity by setting out from the universal experience of faith, of reliance or trust in something. Luther expressed this idea long ago when he asked "What does it mean to have a God, or what is a God?" And answered his question by saying, "Trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol . . . For the two, faith and God, hold together. Whatever then thy heart clings to . . . and relies upon, that is properly thy God. <19>

In short, human life in all of its reflective, affective and active expressions is religiously grounded because all persons live by faith in some "god."

But Niebuhr sees tragedy in such "natural" faith because human beings for the most part vest their trust and invest their loyalty in finite causes. Such finite "gods" are unable to convey infinite value or to conscript universal obligation. They only provide fleeting centers of meaning and fragmentary communities of purpose. "Hence," says Niebuhr, "we become aware of two characteristics of our faith and its gods: that we are divided within ourselves and socially by our religion, and that our gods are unable to save us from the ultimate destruction of meaningless existence." <20>

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Niebuhr further explicates these failings in his analysis of two forms of natural faith -- "henotheism" and "polytheism." <21> For henotheistic faith, some social unit (such as family, nation, church, civilization, even humanity) fulfills the function of god by bestowing the group's prestige and enforcing the group's duties on its members. Polytheistic faith derives its value from many centers of concern (such as health, fame, wealth, pleasure) and divides its loyalties among those who share these varied interests. These two natural forms of faith, often interchangeable in the lives of selves, ultimately fail to provide enduring personal identity and social integration. Polytheism is the more diffuse while henotheism is the more demonic in its effect on personal and social existence. <22> The scattered interests of polytheistic faith obviously fragment individual and social life. By contrast, the social solidarity of henotheistic faith provides a greater unification of self and society, but at the price of collective arrogance and selective aggression. Thus, for Niebuhr, the finite gods whether pluralistic or social, estrange us from ourselves and divide us against one another.

Yet for Niebuhr, something more fundamental lies behind the failures of henotheism and polytheism than their finite gods. The inevitable collapse and destructiveness of these gods are ultimately manifestations of the One and True God's judgment and redemption. <23> Divine judgment and redemption are not limited to some apocalyptic crisis at the end of history nor to some eschatological fulfillment beyond the plane of history. Judgment and redemption are ever-present activities of God in the everyday lives of persons. God continually disrupts those human lives and groups which are centered in a natural religion in order to open them up to the possibility of a radical faith that never divides and never dies. The faith of "radical monotheism" centers in the God beyond all finite things who includes all finite things within his everlasting Kingdom. <24>

This way of coming at the problem of judgment and redemption is reflected in Niebuhr's frequent allusion to Alfred North Whitehead's dictum on religion: "It is the transition from God the void to God the enemy and from God the enemy to God the companion." <25> While Whitehead intended this formula to mark out the stages in religion's evolution, Niebuhr sees this movement as the "experiential logic" of all religion. Every religious quest grows out of a sense of radical incompleteness at life's core. But sooner or later all natural religions collapse into the Void they were intended to dispel. Moreover, their failure seems due less to a mechanical process than to an intentional design. Natural religions are haunted by the sense of a relentless Enemy that seems bent on returning all things finite and human to nothingness. Yet, this grim round is not life's only course and religion's only recourse. There can come into human life a radical faith that transforms this cycle of death into a journey of life. Radical monotheism sees that the Void and the Enemy are one and the same -- they are but manifestations of the Companion who breaks down all finite centers and circles of love for a relationship with God and neighbor that holds no death and creates no

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divisions. Thus, the overcoming of natural faith and the becoming of radical faith are two sides of a single and unending process of judgment and redemption -- of the Void and the Enemy becoming the Companion!

2. The Incarnation of Faith

Faith, whether in its negative forms as henotheism and polytheism or in its positive form as radical monotheism, cannot be reduced to mystical intuitions or verbalized beliefs. Faith is a structure of relationships that brings human beings together in communities of trust and loyalty. Faith is a process of development that binds human beings together in communities of memory and hope. Faith is always embodied in personal history and social institutions. Indeed, every cultural system is finally an expression of one or another of the typical forms of faith. A given culture's politics and economics, sciences and aesthetics are no less an expression of faith than its religions. <26> Religious systems focus directly on personal relations to divine powers. But such systems of doctrine and ritual, of polity and piety by no means constitute the whole of faith. Faith is always embodied in total life -- in public institutions as well as private intuitions, in corporate endeavors as well as individual activities.

As noted above, Niebuhr sees the struggle of faith as continuous. Every area of personal and social life including religion, even for those persons and groups whose institutions and rites are officially "monotheistic," is a wrestle of radical monotheism with its henotheistic and polytheistic rivals. Thus, Niebuhr sees radical faith refracted in only broken and partial ways in faith's typical cultural expressions. But Niebuhr sees less ambiguous manifestations of radical monotheism in certain persons and movements in human history. Israel's great prophets were political advisors, ethical seers, literary innovators and religious reformers who challenged the henotheistic and polytheistic deformations of faith in the name of one Lord above all lords and one Kingdom beyond all kingdoms. So also the radical faith of Jesus Christ appeared as both threat and promise to persons in their political, economic and moral existence as well as their religion. Again, the great Medieval Synthesis and the 16th century Reformation reflected a deeper confidence and wider loyalty than has usually prevailed in Western history. In such moments, Niebuhr declares, humankind's existential distrust and social narcissism were overcome for at least a moment and radical faith became evident in all spheres of cultural activity. <27>

For Niebuhr, Jesus Christ is certainly the definitive revelation of radical faith in Western history.

The greatness of his confidence in the Lord of heaven and earth as fatherly goodness toward all creatures, the constancy of his loyalty to the realm of being, seem unqualified by distrust or competing loyalty.... The word of God as God's oath of fidelity became flesh in him in this sense that he was a man who single-mindedly accepted the

assurance that the Lord of heaven and earth was wholly faithful to him and to all creatures, and who in response gave wholeheartedly loyalty to the realm of being. <28>

In other words, Jesus Christ seen whole incarnates and reveals the human and the divine dimensions of radical faith. Radical faith is always a reciprocal relationship between self, other and God in which God is the prevenient member and mover. Within this dynamic triad, the movement of Jesus Christ toward God and every neighbor was a faithful response to the prevenient movement of God toward Jesus Christ and every neighbor. Given this structure of divine prevenience and human responsiveness, Niebuhr speaks of Jesus Christ as the mediator of both true humanity and true divinity.

Yet, in light of his view of faith as a dynamic triad embracing self, other and God, Niebuhr insists that a response to the faith of Jesus Christ involves more than faith in Jesus Christ. In Niebuhr's scheme, Jesus Christ did and does command personal trust and loyalty by living as a trustworthy and loyal person among persons. But, as a person living among other persons, Jesus Christ did not and does not claim for himself the absolute trust and loyalty that are due only to God. Niebuhr is well aware that Christian theology and piety often simply equate God and Jesus. But he finds that all such simple identifications fall short of a radical faith by limiting God and his realm to the Christian community. Instead, Niebuhr calls for a confessional theology and piety that affirms God's revelatory work in Jesus Christ without limiting that work to one historical event remembered in one historical community.

3. The Extension of Faith

Niebuhr recognizes that attempts to relate God's action in Jesus Christ to God's action in all times and places has often presented a dilemma to theology. In explicating its faith, the church has often chosen between the timeless truth and the unique fact of the Christ event. Jesus Christ is portrayed either as illustrating universal features of divine and human experience (in which case the Christ event is historically accidental), or as demonstrating unique aspects of divine and human activity (in which case the Christ event is historically necessary).

This dilemma does not arise in Niebuhr's analysis. Jesus Christ does reveal the structural dynamics of radical faith in all times and places. But, since God is only concretely present to faith embodied in personal and social experience, Jesus Christ endures in the church as its normative disclosure of divine action and human reaction. Niebuhr compares this historical givenness and universal relevance to a decisive moment in the lives of friends:

In the face of some emergency a man may act so as to reveal a quality undisclosed before. Through that revelatory moment his friend is enabled to understand past actions which had been obscure and to prophesy the

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future behavior of the revealer. But the revelatory moment not only disclosed constant features of conduct which had previously been hidden; it also introduced a new relation between the persons and remains a unique point in their history. <29>

Thus Jesus Christ is an once irrevocably past and particular yet decisively present and relevant in Christian history and for Christian faith.

Put another way, Jesus Christ is the Christian community's "Rosetta Stone" for unlocking and interpreting all the strange signs and sounds of human existence as words of God. Through him, the Christian can apprehend the entire human past as God's provision, the entire human present as God's purpose, the entire human future as God's possibility. But why is the extension of radical faith to the entire human past, present and future vital to the achievement of personal and social wholeness? Niebuhr replies that there can be no enduring personal integrity or human community without unified memories and hopes. <30> Ultimately, the whole sweep of nature and history must be understood and experienced as a single epic. The entire universe -- animate and inanimate, natural and historical, individual and collective, even living and dead -- must be entered into as the one family of the Father God, as the one kingdom of the Sovereign God. Finally, the Christian community must go beyond without leaving behind its particular revelation in its particular history as it seeks and serves God throughout the world.

III. CONCLUSION

Those who have accepted the mandate for a world theology can find no better companion and guide than H. Richard Niebuhr. <31> Speaking of him in this fashion would no doubt embarrass him personally and trouble him theologically were he still alive. The last thing he would have wanted was for his theology to become the focus for a global reformation of religion or transformation of society. Christian theologians can and must bear witness to God from the standpoint of their own particular community with its own particular symbols. But such a "confessional" approach permits no claims for the finality of the Christian experience and understanding of God and the world. God alone stands at the center of any genuine reformation of religion or transformation of society.

But precisely this theocentric critique of all human claims to finality and completeness is what makes Niebuhr a trustworthy guide toward a world theology. His thinking and writing over a lifetime reflect a deliberate search for the growing edges of meaning beyond all existing formulation. Moreover, this search was ecumenical in the broadest sense of the word. Niebuhr fashioned his personal and vocational response to God in conversation with a wide community among the living and the dead. He listened and learned from all the voices that address the human situation, whether their language was orthodox or heretical, biblical or modern, philosophical or literary, sacred or secular. But each voice was critically heard as a witness, more or

less faithful, to the One God whose reign is without escape and whose commonwealth is without end. As such, Niebuhr exemplifies the world theologian in a pluralistic age.

For those unwilling to take the shortcuts offered by the ways of Displacement and Synthesis, mutual dialogue and discovery among the religions is the only way open to a world theology. Such encounters will seek far more than the increase in toleration and discovery of complementarity that always come from serious attempts to understand the religious convictions and experiences of others. Those inquiries will aim at nothing less than reconceiving one's own tradition in the light of the traditions of others. But this way of Reconception must meet two requirements if Niebuhr's analysis of faith is taken seriously. First, those who seek a world theology must adopt a confessional stance. World theologians need not and cannot abandon their own traditions in pursuit of some underlying religiosity or universal creed. Those traditions provide the only means of access and the very source of symbols for the world faith they seek. Second, those who seek a world theology must await a cultural synthesis. World theologians will not and cannot bring the world together by sheer force of intellectual argument or agreement. Interreligious dialogue may bring diverse religious groups together in common cause and creed. But a world faith will only emerge as a world culture emerges. In sum, those who pursue a world theology must take their time, for such a global vision will not arrive suddenly. In the meantime, like Niebuhr, they must seek the fuller truth about themselves and their universe in and through but always beyond and above their highest revelations and noblest achievements.

NOTES

1. The great "missionary" religions of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam clearly advocated an integral and universal faith from their beginnings. But even religions which were theologically polytheistic and socially fissiparous assumed an underlying unity. The gods constituted a pantheon, the castes a people.

2. William Earnest Hocking, Living Religions and a World Faith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940).

3. Owen C. Thomas (ed.), Attitudes Toward Other Religions (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

4. Raymond Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

5. Hocking's arrangement obviously stands behind my scheme, but I have redefined the substance and scope of each category.

6. I include within "tribal religions" those stages of religious evolution which Robert L. Bellah calls "primitive" and "archaic." Bellah, "Religious Evolution," in Reader In Comparative Religion, eds. William A. Lessa and Evan Z. Vogt (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 36-50.

7. For example, see Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York: Harper & Row, 1938); Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946).

8. For example, see Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol 5. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966); Raymond Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

9. For example, See Arnold Toynbee, Christianity Among the Religions of the World (New York: Scribner's, 1957); Huston Smith, Forgotten Truth (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

10. For example, John Hick, God Has Many Names (London: Macmillan, 1980); Paul Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Towards a World Theology (London: Macmillan, 1980); John B. Cobb, Christ in a Pluralistic Age (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975); Alan Race, Christians and Religious Pluralism (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1982). Though they worked with more static ontologies, Ernst Troeltsch, The Absoluteness of Christianity (London: SCM Press, 1901) and Hocking, loc. cit. also belong in this category.

11. Compare to Hocking. loc. cit., pp. 194-95.

12. For a comprehensive treatment of Niebuhr's theology and ethics, see Lonnie D. Kliever, H. Richard Niebuhr (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977).
13. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 77.
14. Niebuhr, "On the Nature of Faith," in Religious Experience and Truth, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1961), p. 100.
15. Niebuhr, Ibid.; Radical Monotheism and Western Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 16ff.; Christ and Culture (New York: Harper Brothers, 1951), pp. 252 ff.; The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 83-89.
16. Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 16-23, 110-11, 118; The Responsible Self, pp. 83-89.
17. Niebuhr, "The Triad of Faith," Andover Newton Bulletin, XLVII (October, 1954), p. 8; "On the Nature of Faith," pp. 93-102; Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 16-33; The Responsible Self, pp. 79, 118-21.
18. Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 24-37; The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 94-104; The Responsible Self, pp. 108-126.
19. Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, p. 119.
20. Ibid. , p. 120.
21. Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 77-78; Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 24-31; The Responsible Self, pp. 98-100, 106, 121-23, 137-40; "Man the Sinner," Journal of Religion 15 (1935), pp. 278-80.
22. Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 25-31; "Man the Sinner," pp. 278-79.
23. Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 122-23; The Responsible Self, pp. 139-41.
24. For various characterizations of the term "radical monotheism," see Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 31-37.
25. Ibid. , pp. 123-24.
26. Niebuhr demonstrates the ways in which the different forms of faith are expressed in the religious, political and scientific expressions of culture in Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 49-89.

27. Ibid., pp. 39-42.

28. Ibid. , p. 42.

29. Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation, p. 129. Cf. Christ and Culture, p. 255; The Responsible Self, pp. 154-57, 175-78.

30. Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 109-37; Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, pp. 47-48; The Responsible Self; pp. 95-107, 121-26.

31. Their mandate is not my own. Elsewhere I have argued for religious pluralism as an inescapable fact and unrecognized value of modernity. See Lonnie D. Kliever, The Shattered Spectrum (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), pp. 1-19, 185-205; "Authority in a Pluralistic World" in Modernization, ed. Richard L. Rubenstein (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1982), pp. 81-98; "Religion and the Democratization of Culture," in The Worldwide Impact of Religion on Politics, ed. Richard L. Rubenstein (New York: Paragon House Publishers, in press).