

# No Other Name!

(Acts 4:12)

## Theological Declaration Concerning the Assessment of the Religions in the Light of the Gospel

Passed By the Theological Convention of Confessing Fellowships  
on November 20, 1999 in Krelingen, Germany

### Preliminary Remarks:

In the following document we wish to remind the Christian community of our responsibility to preserve the purity of the one saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ entrusted to us in the Holy Scriptures and to thankfully give testimony about it to others in love.

Our aim is not to demean other religions and their cultural values, or calling upon Christians to meet their adherents in ways which are disparaging, hostile, or fearful.

Neither is it our intention to exaggerate the value of our own "Christian religion", whose numerous deformations and abuses we are well aware of.

Rather, we are motivated by our concern for salvation as is emphasized in I Timothy 2:3-4, which says, "*God . . . wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*"

### Introduction:

As Christians we confess Jesus Christ as God's only way of salvation. Therefore, we preach the Gospel as God's only message of salvation to lost humanity separated from Him.

- The Holy Scriptures attest clearly to this (John 14:6; I Timothy 2:5).
- All denominations of the Church affirm this in their confessions.
- This has been the foundation and the motivation of Christian world mission since the days of the apostles.

Yet, today, this basic truth no longer represents the unanimous conviction of all who call themselves Christians. Many wonder if, besides that of the Christian faith, there are other ways of salvation possible, which lead their adherents to God, and which may then also be accessible for Christians as an alternative or in addition to the Christian faith.

The present uncertainty results from several different *causes*:

- the modern encounter with other religions and with their adherents even in traditionally Christian countries, gives rise to a religious market with offers of seemingly equal value;
- the one-sided portrayal of other religions in the media tends to recommend them without calling attention to their negative aspects;
- a "neutral" and, at times, even syncretistic religious instruction in the schools contrary to church confession, promotes the central idea of mutual tolerance (even regarding content) of a plurality of claims to legitimacy in a multi-cultural society;
- the openness of theology and church practice to an understanding of religion relativizes or abandons the confession of the universal lordship and redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the necessity of faith in Him for salvation;
- the waning of respect for the authority of the Bible loses sight of scripture's judgment concerning the pre-Christian and non-Christian religions;
- the modern relativizing of all truth is promoted by secular scientific research and the humanistic interpretation of religions and their history.

We recognize in this development a *spiritual danger* of the greatest proportions to our churches and their members. The danger is that

- the indispensable meaning of the Christian faith for our life in time and eternity is being called into question;
- Christians are being misled by other types of spirituality, having in part, at least, an occult background;
- the pastoral and teaching offices of the church are being adapted to religious pluralism, and that thereby an endangered church is being misled;
- the awareness of missionary responsibility is declining and the obedience to Jesus' Great Commission, essential for the spiritual life of the Church, is ceasing;
- our culture is being alienated from its Christian foundations so that the other religions spreading among us are gaining an ever-greater influence on public life. Our European nations as well as our churches are being threatened by this.

In view of the increasing uncertainty of Christians and churches, the Theological Convention sees its obligation to issue this declaration as a guide for orientation.

We are addressing it to

- all leaders in churches, missions, theology, and schools;
- all church congregations and Christian associations;
- all concerned Christians

advising them to read the declaration carefully and to examine it with the Bible and their church's confession, to discuss it with others, to distribute it, and to pass it on to persons positions of responsibility associated with them.

## I. God's Universal Self-Declaration in the Biblical Gospel

### 1. The Biblical God

**The living, triune God, as He has reliably revealed Himself to all of humanity in the Bible, is, as opposed to all other gods of the other religions, the only true God.**

*We believe and profess:* The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments tell us clearly that God is eternally one, and as the living and sovereign One differs fundamentally from all false "gods" (Deuteronomy 6:4f.; Psalm 115:3-7; Isaiah 44:6; Jeremiah 10:6; I Corinthians 8:4-6). In his tri-personal nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, He is one complete fellowship of love in Himself who has gone out of Himself in order to fulfil His redemptive plan (Genesis 1:1f.; John 1:1f.; 15:26; I John 4:9; II Corinthians 13:13). Because He made man in his own image (Genesis 1:27), He is, as Creator, Redeemer, and Renewer, the origin and goal of every human being. For this reason He calls all humanity to acknowledge Him and believe in Him (Ecclesiastes 11:9; II Corinthians 5:10; Psalm 46:11).

All concepts of God must be tested as to whether or not they are true to His Biblical self-revelation. Multi-religious worship services where different deities are invoked, disregard this; they are, therefore, an insult to God's majesty and a violation of the First Commandment (II Corinthians 6:14-16; Exodus 20:3,5).

*We reject* the widespread view that no certain teachings can be made about "the divine" as the "mystery of life". The related assertion, made by the philosophy of religions approach, that the diverse religions are all derived from one and the same mystic source and therefore are equally – legitimate, mutually complementary attempts to explain this mystery conceptually or through the

path of spiritual experience, is just as unfounded. Therefore, every mixing of religions must be rejected.

*"I am the first and I am the last, and there is no god but me." (Isaiah 44:6 NEB)*

*"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form ..." (Colossians 2:9 NIV)*

**2. The Lostness of Humanity** Since the Fall of Man, all human beings have been in a condition of alienation from God, depravity, subject to death from birth on, and cannot free themselves from this, not even by means of the religions.

*We believe and profess:* Human destitution goes back to a rebellion against the Creator which is repeated by every human being and is deserved (Genesis 3:1-19; Psalm 51:7; Romans 3:23; 5:12). The Holy Scriptures call this destitute condition lostness and life without God (Luke 19:10; Ephesians 2:12), and rules out every thought of self-redemption (Psalm 49:8; Ephesians 2:8f.).

We, therefore, *reject* all diagnoses of this destitute condition offered by non-Christian religions and ideologies as well as their promises to find one's way back to salvation by means of what they offer, as misleading (Isaiah 44:9).

All religious systems which base redemption wholly or partially on human effort in a ritualistic or moral way and thus deny the brokenness of the original relationship to God, must be exposed as *false*. Even more dangerous are the religious systems - especially the traditional, mystic religions of Asia - which go so far as to teach an enduring essential oneness of the human self with the deity, and call for acknowledging and realizing this teaching in practice.

*"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,..." (Romans 3:23)*

*"... know that a man is not justified by observing the law,..." (Galatians 2:16)*

### 3. The Finality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

**The absolute validity and indispensability of the Gospel are based on the fact that salvation and the Kingdom of God have come to us only in Jesus Christ, the Son of God become man.**

*We believe and profess:* In Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God the Father, He has spoken to us in a final way at the end as His *special revelation* of salvation (Hebrews 1:2). Through His Incarnation performed by the Holy Spirit and His atoning death Christ reconciled lost humanity to God and redeemed it from the destructive powers of sin, death, and the Devil (II Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:7f.; Hebrews 2:14f.). By Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension to Heaven God the Father has confirmed Him as the only mediator between Himself and humanity and appointed Him the universal Lord over all powers and authorities as well as future Judge of the world (Matthew 28:18; Acts 10: 36-42; I Timothy 2:5f.). Therefore, eternal salvation or damnation is decided by either turning to Him in faith or by rejecting Him (John 3:16; Mark 16:16).

The absolute validity of the Gospel of Christ is in line with the apostolic *prohibition* to change it or to preach "another Jesus" (Galatians 1:6-9; II Corinthians 11:2-4). This means rejecting any attempt to place other supposed bearers of salvation or founders of religions alongside the Lord Jesus Christ, denying His unique distinction as divine-human Redeemer. No less does His work of salvation, completed once for all time, tolerate any religious addition to this. This excludes every other supposed means of salvation (John 14:6).

*"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6 NIV)*

*"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 NIV)*

**4. The Holy Spirit and the Church of Jesus Christ** Jesus Christ has brought those who believe in Him through His Spirit in the closest way possible together into the Church, called out of the world, to give testimony to her as His body in word and deed concerning the Kingdom of God which has come in Him and which is expected to come.

*We believe and profess:* The salvation community of the Church of Jesus Christ is the beginning of a new humanity to which all human beings of all peoples are invited (Titus 2:11-14; Ephesians 2:14-17; II Corinthians 4:6). Through the gift of His *Holy Spirit* on Pentecost Jesus Christ allows the Church to take part in His gifts of grace and authorizes it to perform the work of priests in the world (Isaiah 11:1f.; Acts 1:8; Revelation 1:6; Romans 15:16). This New Testament view thus not only gives the Christian Church the right, but also the missionary duty, to preach the Gospel to the adherents of all religions, including Judaism and Islam. A further consequence of this is the necessity of becoming a member of the Christian Church by faith and baptism, for it is through the Church and in it that Christ gives us the gift of eternal life and unites us to the one body (Romans 1:16f; Acts 2:38; I Corinthians 12:13).

*It is wrong,* therefore, to assert that Christ, anonymously, as well as the Holy Spirit, presumably poured out universally, is effective in giving salvation in all religions, and to hold the opinion that an inter-religious dialogue can replace missionary preaching with its call to conversion. It is just as misleading to equate the Church of Jesus Christ with all humanity, or to call any religious association outside the church a "latent church".

*"...you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:6; I Peter 2:9f. NIV)*  
*"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth ... at that time you were separate from Christ, ... without hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:11-12 NIV)*

## II. The Nature of the Other Religions in Light of the Biblical Revelation

### 5. Humanity's Religious Search

**God created man in His likeness and for fellowship with Him in an eternal life and is therefore waiting for his return to Him.**

*We believe and profess:* Even after the Fall of man and his expulsion from immediate closeness to God, an indestructible longing for God has remained in humanity. In this God's will manifests itself to bring people back into fellowship with Him (Acts 17:26-28a; I Timothy 2:4) and to renew them from within through spiritual rebirth (John 3:5f; II Corinthians 5:17). Religions, as they universally appear-with all the diversity of contradictions-are ways pointing to the original divine purpose of man. At the same time, though, they demonstrate man's inability to fulfil this through his own insight and power. Yet, because the Gospel is the absolutely valid answer to the basic longing of humanity for salvation, there are also points of contact to be found in its religious ideas and expressions for a missionary proclamation. Through these God the Father wishes to draw every human being to Himself into a intense, personal relationship with Him in Jesus Christ (John 6:44; 12:32; I John 1:3), which one cannot find through one's own thought-out ways.

The following popular views must be *rejected*:

1. that people in their religions are not only looking for salvation, but have even already found it;
2. that even Christians, who have received God's complete revelation in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2), are still people searching for the truth of salvation, and should therefore do this together with the representatives of "other living faiths" (other religions) in an inter-religious dialogue;

3. that the religious efforts of people must be evaluated as being nothing but a rebellion against God. For this radical view does not recognize the quality of God's likeness which remains even in fallen man.

*"He (God) has also set eternity in the hearts of men ..." (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV)*

*"... he (God) determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, ..." (Acts 17:26f. NIV)*

## 6. God's General Revelation in the Beginning and in the Works of His Creation

**God even made it possible for fallen humanity to know Him and His will to certain extent, so that it would seek Him, praise Him, and thank Him.**

*We believe and profess:* God has revealed Himself personally to the original parents of mankind and made His will known to them. This paradisiacal knowledge and worship of the one God and Creator remained in the subsequent generations, although dimmed and twisted. After the original judgments such as the expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24), the Deluge (Genesis 8:20-22; 9:1-17), and the scattering of the nations (Genesis 11:7-9), God has made Himself known to man through the works of His creation, in His power, wisdom, and goodness (Romans 1:19f.; Acts 14:17; Matthew 5:45; Ecclesiastes 13:3-5), has implanted into man's heart an ethical will in the shape of values and norms of behavior (Romans 2:14-16) and lets man feel his closeness and relatedness of nature (Acts 17:27b, 28). In this way each of His personal creatures bears responsibility before Him and is obliged to gratefully worship Him and to obediently serve Him (Romans 1:21).

Therefore, many non-Christian religions show ideas of a powerful creator god who watches over good and evil, and who shares essential features with God's Biblical self-revelation. In their provisionality pre-Christian religions can form part of the order with which God preserves the world, even though they have perverted the divine truth (Romans 1:18-23). Through that order God, in His patience and goodness, protects humanity from self-destruction so that after the coming of the Savior Christ, and through the world-wide preaching of the Gospel, they will be able to receive the salvation which has been completed by Him (1 Timothy 2:1-4; II Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4). This amounts to a provisional divine tolerance of pre- and non-Christian religions, although only for those members who have not been reached by the message of salvation (Deuteronomy 4:19b). Therefore, God's patience in salvation history in principle ends with the completion of the work of salvation by Jesus Christ, and in practice everywhere the Gospel is convincingly preached.

For Christian missionary preaching, the Biblical teaching on God's general revelation, which also effects the religions, is indispensable. For it is the foundation for the task of speaking to people about God's provisional work in them, and for showing them their need of God (Romans 1:21-23; 3:23).

Therefore, we *reject* the one-sided tendency of some Christian theologians to accept the theories of Ludwig Feuerbach and Sigmund Freud, according to whom all ideas of God are only psychological projections.

Conversely, we disagree when the *general revelation* in Creation described above is made equal to a supposed *universal revelation of salvation*. For God has revealed Himself alone in Jesus Christ for salvation, and, therefore, the mission to all peoples remains necessary.

In this context, also, we disapprove of the concept of a so-called "*Abrahamic ecumenicity*" of the three monotheistic religions because it fails to recognize the fundamental differences between the statements made both in the Bible and in the Koran, even concerning Abraham himself!, and pretends that the religions have common ground regarding salvation. God's universal act of salvation on the cross is thereby again disregarded.

*"May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth." (Psalm 67:4 NIV)*

*"... since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them." (Romans 1:19 NIV)*

**7. The Demonic Elements of the Religions**The Holy Scriptures condemn pagan religions because these are marked by the rebellion of humanity against God and are, moreover, influenced by Satan. Both have a role in determining the empirical form of the religions in moving them away from God's general revelation.

*We believe and understand:* apostate humanity is moved in its religious orientation and practice by equality with God, selfish desires for power, knowledge, and abundant life (Genesis 3:4-6; 11:1f.; Habakkuk 1:11b). Under the influence of God's adversary, the Devil, they revere *false gods* (idols) instead of the true God, behind which real demonic powers hide themselves (I Corinthians 10:20). Consequently, the true knowledge of God remaining in man does not lead to the complete devotion to Him in praise and obedience which is due Him, but, rather, to spiritual blindness, and in the most extreme case, even spiritistic slavery occurs to different degrees (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Romans 1:21-23; Isaiah 44:9; II Corinthians 4:3f.; Galatians 4:8).

Therefore, the world of the pagan religions, regardless of the elements of truth and morality which remain, is, in principal, under *God's wrath* (Romans 1:18; Ephesians 2:3; John 3:36b). While this is held back by His patience towards the adherents of pre-Christian religions, it threatens, however, those who fall back into paganism occasionally or entirely in spite of their knowledge and acceptance of His redemption (Ephesians 5:3-12; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31).

This Biblical view is contrary to the popular tendency of present-day theology which, in opposition to the Bible and the Church Fathers, disregards the demonic factor in the non-Christian religions as well as the wrath of God upon all religious acts directed against God. We also reject the common practice of downplaying the otherness of these religions as "living faiths of man", because this gives a syncretistic tendency especially to the dialogue programs, insofar as these include any "sharing in spirituality". Where such tendencies are a part of Christian religious instruction or even worship service events (for example, through the active participation of representatives of other religions), Christians point to the Biblical prohibition of mixing Christian with non-Christian religious convictions and acts and of participating in the rites and worship practices of non-Christian religions (II Corinthians 6:9f.; Revelation 2:14-16, 20ff.).

*"How long will you waver between two opinions?" (I Kings 18:21 NIV)*

*"No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons." (I Corinthians 10:20 NIV)*

### III. Appropriate Behavior When Meeting Other Religions

**8. The Critical Distinction**The Biblical view of the other religions allows us to recognize three dynamic impulses in them: the divine, the human, and the demonic. These stand in a tense relational framework to one another and must be distinguished from one another in every meeting with non-Christian religions and their representatives.

Tri-Polar View of the Religions

I God

Father a

Son b

Holy Spirit c

II Man d

e  
f

III Demons     g  
                     h  
                     i

## Religious Ideas, Behavior, and Systems in Tripolar Tension

### I. Divine Dimension (Romans 1:19-20):

a) provision (Acts 14:17), b) light (John 1:9), c) blessings (Genesis 14:19)

### II. Human Dimension (Acts 17:21f.):

d) search for God (Acts 17:27f.), e) refusal (Isaiah 53:1a) f) rebellion (Jude 11)

### III. Demonic Dimension (I Corinthians 10:20):

g) blinding (II Corinthians 4:4) h) deception (Genesis 3:4-5), i) control (Ephesians 2:2)

*We believe and profess:* according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures the non-Christian religions are characterized by three factors. These are: firstly, the patient work of God in His general revelation to prepare for the special revelation of salvation; secondly, the ambivalent religious practice of humanity, and, thirdly, the deceptive work of Satan and his demons. A proper assessment of the religions applied in a pastoral way to our partner calls for making a difference between these three factors and for realizing how they work together within this tension towards one another. For only by paying attention to the specific religious-theological aspects can we set Biblical testimony into the right relationship to the spiritual condition of our non-Christian discussion partner. Otherwise, we are in danger of either making disastrous compromises with him, or, of doing the opposite by blankly rejecting his convictions.

Insight into the tension-laden character of religion *forbids* us to limit our inquiries into the religions we encounter to presumably "neutral", general information about the religion, or to leave out of consideration the representatives of the respective religion as persons. Likewise, it *warns* us against purely speculative theories of religion as well as against religious-theological directions of thought which, instead of giving attention to the complete context of the Bible, make use of those statements of Scripture which emphasize only one or two of the three factors which must be considered. Only a theology of comparative religions which allows the entire testimony of Scripture is able to properly interpret also the complexity of the findings of the study of religions.

This critical distinction must also be applied to ourselves as *Christians* because the person redeemed through Christ is only beginning to be relieved of the field of tension between false religion and true faith (Romans 8:24a; II Corinthians 11:3f.). There is, therefore, a dangerous possibility of detaching "Christian spirituality" from the living Biblical act of faith as well as of relapsing into pre-Christian religiosity (Galatians 3:1; Hebrews 4:1,11). According to the convictions of the Protestant Reformers, the conflict between *true and false religion* is deeply that between living trust in the triune God revealed in Christ on the one hand, and all forms of self-authorized religiosity which is not defined by faith in Jesus Christ, on the other hand. The latter is still a constant danger to the Church of Jesus Christ. Even Christian piety, then, can degenerate into self-authorized religiosity

(for example, nationalized Christianity; theology of success, etc.). The knowledge that even our own Christian existence is constantly threatened by religious degeneration (I Corinthians 10:12) should protect us as Christians from a self-assured, arrogant attitude when confronting non-Christian religions.

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23f. NIV)*  
*"... test the spirits to see whether they are from God ..." (I John 4:1 NIV).*

## **9. Christian Witness in Missions and Apologetics Meeting adherents of other religions calls Christians, above all, to missionary responsibility.**

*We believe and profess:* We owe it to the adherents of other religions, to testify to them for Jesus Christ as the one Lord and Redeemer of the whole world (Mark 13:10). It is important to make clear with this how their own religions heretofore find their fulfillment in Him, yet also are judged by Him (Acts 17:23; II Corinthians 5:14). This is also true concerning Judaism, which is the most closely-related to Christianity.

*Dialogue* that makes an effort at mutual understanding constitutes a precondition which leads to missionary testimony. An inter-religious dialogue, for this reason, is not necessarily in opposition to missions. Rather, it is justified where it eases the task of missions, or, especially in multi-cultural societies, helps overcome religious-social conflicts, and thus contributes to the good of society (Jeremiah 29:7). However, dialogue can never replace the indispensable demand made by Christian missions to reject the previous religious powers, to trust Jesus Christ in repentance and faith as personal Savior, and to obey Him as Lord (Acts 2:38; 14:15; I Thessalonians 1:19). This apostolic plea holds true for the adherents of all religions including *Judaism* (Romans 10:4; Acts 3:26; 14:1) and *Islam*. It also holds true for the representatives of a *syncretistic new religiosity* enriched by Christian thought and the adherents of *quasi-religious ideologies* and *utopias*.

We also *refute* the common prejudice today asserting that this view is arrogant, "fundamentalist", and out-dated because it is said to overlook the spiritual reality of the "other forms of faith". In light of the Biblical understanding of religion and missions, we stand *in opposition* to the view that true missions results in reciprocity possibly with the goal of making the adherents of other religions aware of this supposedly anonymously present "*cosmic Christ*". Just as untenable is the conviction that inter-religious meetings must be limited to mutual understanding.

*"... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10f. NIV; cf. Isaiah 45:23f.)*  
*"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (II Corinthians 5:20 NIV)*

## **10. Spiritual Sobriety In View of the Future**

**With the progress of human history towards the end, the world of the non-Christian religions is taking on more and more a markedly anti-Christian character.**

*We believe and understand:* Jesus Christ Himself has foretold us that in the end times there will be an increased activity of false christs (Matthew 24:23-25) as well as an anti-Christian world kingdom on the basis of a forced ideological conformity (Revelation 13; 17:13). Many Bible interpreters believe this could take the form of a *unity religion*, encompassing all religions and ideologies. It is feared that in it an *anti-Church* will be inserted into it which is syncretistic and adapted to it. Moreover, one must be prepared that the last and worst persecution, then, of the truly faithful Church of Jesus Christ will go forth from this anti-Christian world unity religion (Revelation 12:17; 13:15b; 17:6).

Even now we recognize in many present-day spiritual movements and events in the church, ecumenical circles, and the world a prelude to this apocalyptic drama. One example is the indifference, even sympathy which persons of responsibility in the churches show towards the intrusion of non-Christian religions into all areas of life and who justify such behavior by falsely appealing to the *command of tolerance*. This goes along with the willingness of many church members to get involved in the tempting offers of non-Christian religions, to compromise or even entirely giving up their own faith. We also see that, with reference to irreversible globalization and the need to build a just and peaceful world community capable of survival, the syncretistic maelstrom for the churches will become greater and greater.

In view of the prophecy of the maturation of a final, totalitarian, globally-accepted form of syncretism – the "prostitute Babylon" (Revelation 17) – the express will of the Lord of the Church must be taken seriously, that His Church be brought to Him as a "pure virgin" whose faith has remained pure from pagan defilement (II Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 14:4f.). At the same time, Christ wills that all who believe in Him *be one*, as He is one with the Father, so that the world will believe (John 17:21). The endeavor of His Church to keep her pure apostolic faith (Ephesians 4:3-6) and to overcome divisions which have arisen (I Corinthians 1:10), serves the purpose of living in the world her unity founded in Jesus Christ in a convincing way until the end (John 13:35). Those followers of Jesus who are faithful in their witness and ready to die are promised that they, in looking forward to the return of the Lord, will overcome their Satanic enemy and will experience the fruit of their witness (Romans 16:20; Revelation 3:7-9). In the final battle of the religions and ideologies against the Gospel Christ Himself then will provide the visible proof of truth, and God's faithfulness to His own will triumph (Revelation 17:14; 19:11-21).

*"And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." (Malachi 3:18 NIV)*

*"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." (Revelation 12:11 NIV)*

## Practical Consequences

In view of the dual conclusion firstly, that other religions, with their competing claims to truth and salvation, are currently making inroads into the West, which formerly was predominantly influenced by Christianity, and, secondly, that the churches stand defenseless theologically against the spread of a syncretistic climate which accompanies it,

**we urgently ask** the leaders of church organizations and all those entrusted with the ministry of teaching at universities, seminaries, and Bible colleges to seriously enter into the diacritical discussion with the non-Christian religions. It is imperative that informative, Biblically-clear, and easy-to-understand materials be made available to ordinary Christians for orientation and guidance. The Confessional fellowships would like to support you in this task with their own materials, including this declaration and follow-up literature.

At the same time, we **strongly warn** those responsible (see Acts 20:28-30!) of having an improper understanding of tolerance which only encourages the syncretistic infiltration of our churches. This could happen, namely, by fraternizing with missionaries of other religions, especially when these often present themselves in a winsome manner. Inter-religious prayer services at church conventions, at theological seminaries, and in churches also have the same obfuscating effect.

Finally, **we encourage** all church members to become certain again of their faith which is being tested by the competing offers of other religions. We gain this kind of certainty by trusting in the truth of the Word of God as we experience the saving power of the Gospel. Let us neither be fascinated by the self-confident presentation of representatives of other religions, nor also be

frightened or become aggressive. For the exalted Lord Jesus Christ Himself stands beside us when we meet them. He takes away all useless care and reminds us: "...for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:18-20 NIV). Let us, therefore, approach adherents of other religions in a friendly way, showing them help and hospitality, giving witness to the convincing love of Jesus Christ, and in this way extending His offer of salvation even for them!

***"Salvation is found in now one else,  
for there is no other name  
under heaven given to men  
by which we must be saved."***

(Acts 4:12 NIV)

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*"You have made us for yourself,  
so our souls are restless  
until they rest in you."*

(Augustine)