

## **Inclusive Religious Pluralism Undergirding Interreligious Dialogue as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Theological Model for Mission**

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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its unique strong emphasis on religious freedom, respect for the other, celebrating our differences, and dignity for all, the old Christian approach to mission is not only frowned upon but also considered theologically obsolete and even repudiated. The old Christian approach to mission was underscored by a primary focus on conversion to Christianity and numerical growth of Christians. Those objectives were promoted among other means through minimalizing other religions and religious orientations as well as denigrating the values and dignity of those religions. Since the end of the Second World War, following the devastations of the Holocaust and rise of new non-Christian nations around the globe, Christians in their different camps have significantly abandoned the exclusivistic religious mentality and abhorring disrespect for other religions. In the Catholic circle, especially resulting from Vatican II, a more inclusive approach to soteriology has also become dominant. This new approach softened Catholics hardline and negativity towards non-Christian religions and their peoples. Given the growth and theological appreciation of more inclusive understanding of salvation and new respect and value of other religions, it is imperative to advocate a new approach to mission that reflects the new inclusive understanding of soteria and appreciation of other religious traditions. This paper will propose an inclusive religious pluralistic theological worldview both as an appropriate theological framework for effective dialogue and approach to mission. It will argue in favor of interreligious dialogue as a model for mission and how this mission when underscored by a theology of inclusive religious pluralism demands for an appropriately 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to mission. A mission that is not grounded on the primary goal of conversion to Christianity, but rather advocates a promotion of Christ like lives among all peoples, regardless of their faith and religious tradition. This paper will argue that the goal of a 21<sup>st</sup> century mission should be a conversion of heart of people to God, which evokes Christ like morality and spirit and not necessarily a membership affiliation to any particular Christian denomination.

This paper will most appropriately fit into the “interreligious issues” study group. It may also be appropriate in the “theology of mission” and “religious freedom and mission” study groups.