

The Spirit of God Preparing Our Engagement

Dr. Bernhard Reitsma

- Professor by special appointment VU University Amsterdam
- Senior Lecturer (Islam and Missiology) and project leader Diversity and Islam at Christian University of applied sciences
- B.j.g.reitsma@vu.nl
- reitsma@solcon.nl

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1. Introduction

Several years ago, on the morning of Ied il Adha, the Islamic Festival of Sacrifice, the call of the minaret woke me at 4.30 am. Early, but not unusual when you are living in Amman, as I was at that time. However, this morning I could not catch my sleep again. Until late that morning there was an unceasing sound of recitation and joy. Unrelentlessly everyone was reminded of the fact that God is greater: 'Allahoe Akbar'. The atmosphere was almost like winning the world cup football/soccer. I had always believed that Islam was a rigid, joyless and even boring religion, yet here I was confronted with an explosion of religious joy.

Through this experience the question that had been lingering in my mind, forced itself upon me with new vigour. What is the meaning of religious experiences of people who do not know Christ, yet seem to be in touch with the Divine. In conservative protestant and evangelical circles, this issue is rarely addressed. In relation to Islam especially all emphasis is on dogmatic questions, like the uniqueness of Christ, the Sonship of Jesus, the trinity and the meaning of revelation. But the spirituality of Muslims is as much an issue as doctrine. How do we interpret that in the light of the Gospel. We confess, that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts. 4:12 ESV); in general we believe that Christian spirituality has to do with experiencing the only true God, the Father of Jesus Christ. Does that then suggest that the religious experiences of others are simply false or misleading? What about Buddhists that meditate, Jews that ecstatically celebrate Simchat Torah (the feast of the Torah) or for that matter Muslims that exuberantly commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Christians usually connect their spirituality and religious experience with the Spirit of God, but what about the religious experiences of non-Christians. What if Muslims pray and their prayers are being answered? Are they completely disconnected from the Holy Spirit? And if not, then what does that connection look like?

These questions kept me occupied on that early morning of 'Ied El Adha and deserve further thought. In trying to interpret the religious experiences of Muslims,¹ my starting point is Romans 8, one of the most poignant New Testament expositions of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.²

¹ Here I limit myself to the religious experiences of Muslims, although the same question could be asked concerning adherents of other religions. However, Islam and Christianity share their faith in one single and 'personal' God.

² We should be careful not to call it a systematic exposé, since even Paul's letter to the Romans was a 'word on

2. The Spirit as the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8)

Paul is discussing the person and work of the Spirit in Romans 8 in the context of the opposition of the two ages, the old and the new aeon.³ With respect to the ages, it is not the element of time that is conclusive, but the aspect of power and dominion. The old age, that has entered the world with Adam (Rom. 5:12-14, 17), is the era that is determined by the powers of sin, death and the flesh. These powers collaborate to form a deadly coalition and in this they are able to misuse the Torah (Rom. 7:13-26). Although the Torah in itself is good and holy (Rom. 7:12) it is compelled to contribute to the evil scheme of the powers of the old age. In a world dominated by sin, the Law can only point out sin and condemn the sinner to death (Rom. 6...).⁴

Over against this regime of sin, death and the flesh, we find the new life through the Spirit (Rom. 8:2). The coming of Christ is the watershed in history, the turning point of the ages. (cf. Rom. 6; 7:1-6; 8:1). God has ultimately and decisively acted in history by sending His son and by definitively eliminating sin in Him on the cross (Rom. 8:2, 3). The old age has yielded to the new, the eschaton is here, the last days have arrived. Righteousness is now replacing sin, (Rom. 6:13, 18-20), life death, grace the law (Rom. 6:14) and the Spirit the flesh (Rom. 8:3-9). Instead of sin the Spirit now lives in the believers (cf. Rom. 7:20 and 8:9, 11). He ensures that the new life he brings is actually lived. Under the old regime of sin and death, the law could not be fulfilled; now the righteous requirement of the law is being fulfilled in the heart of the believers (8:4). In baptism they have died with Christ to the powers of the old regime in order that - raised with Him - they would walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4); they are death to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11). Through and in the death of Christ they have been released from the law that held them captives, to be raised in freedom to serve in the new way of the Spirit (6:17, 18; 7:6). In short, sin has lost its power over them; it is the Spirit that now rules over their lives. Paul emphasizes with great force that these two regimes are absolute. They mutually exclude each other. Someone is a slave either of sin which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness (Rom. 6:16); someone lives either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-9). For 'the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God' (Rom. 8:7) but 'those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (Gal. 5:24) and have become slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). Anyone who is in Christ, is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

With this, Paul does not want to claim that sin does not exist for the believer anymore. The powers of the old age have not completely disappeared and their influence is present until today. The body is dead because of sin (Rom. 8:10) and mortal (Rom. 8:11). Although the believer is a child of God and therefore heir, the inheritance is still awaiting (Rom. 8:17, 23). Reality is marked by the tension between old and new. However, this does not mean that the two sides are in balance. The presence of the new life does not compare to

target', written in a specific situation for a specific occasion (Cf. B.J.G. Reitsma, *Geest en schepping. Een bijbels-theologische bijdrage aan de systematische doordenking van de verhouding van de Geest van God en de geschapen werkelijkheid*, Zoetermeer 1997,...). Nevertheless, the letter is basic for Paul in that sense, that he carefully explains here the core elements of the Gospel he preached, cf. Reitsma, *Geest en schepping*. p. 68 n. 3. Within the letter, Chapter 8 is again essential as far as it concerns the Spirit of God, p. 68 n. 2.

³ Paul does not use the terminology of the two aeons here, but does refer to that part of the worldview of the second temple period that speaks about the *olam haze* and the *olam haba*, cf. Reitsma, p. 70, 71. Cf. pp 69-120, specifically p. 69-80, concerning the two ages in Romans 5-8.

⁴ Cf. Reitsma, p. 71-73.

the remnants of the old. The present is the transition from one age to the other. Through the cross and the resurrection of Christ the sufferings of this present time serve the coming of the new life. The whole creation is groaning together in the pains of *childbirth*. In other words, the pain of the present time leads to new life, not to death. It is the sign that something new is about to break through, the fullness of the glory of God (cf. Rom. 8:18, 23).

In this tension the Spirit works in two ways. First He bestows upon the world new life in Christ. In the Spirit the eschatological glory is already present. The Spirit is the new authority that rules over the believers and the Christian community. Secondly and simultaneously, the Spirit unmask the old age as a reality that has been alienated from God, as a regime of sin and death. By revealing life in the midst of the old aeon, He also convicts the creation that has been subjected to futility (Rom. 8:20). Everything is being judged according to the measure of the cross of Christ.⁵

By characterizing the Spirit as the predominant power and inaugurator of the new regime, Paul has decisively defined the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ (8:9). We can only refer to the Spirit and His work in relation to Christ. Only through Him and the aeon that has begun in Him we can discern and identify the Spirit of God.

The above implies that it is impossible to disconnect the 'universal' work of the Spirit from Christ. The Spirit that according to Genesis 1:2 hovered over the face of the waters, that filled the craftsmen of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:31) and that makes the whole creation live (Ps. 104:30), is no other than the Spirit we have come to know through Christ. It goes without saying that in the time of the Old Testament this was not disclosed in the same way as in the New Testament. We cannot erase salvation history. Still the person and work of Christ is central to a Christian understanding of reality. He is the one that qualifies our life, our thinking and our theologizing. He is the frame of reference. Therefore everything we presume to know and try to express, always has to be related to Christ. It is similar to the relationship I have with my wife. I cannot speak about her other than as the one that I married. I cannot pretend to see her in any other way. Even when I look at a picture of her as a child, it remains a picture of my wife. Strictly speaking that would be an anachronism, but there is no other way I can refer to her than as my wife. In a similar way, we can only refer to the Spirit and His work in the whole cosmos from the perspective of our relationship with Christ.⁶ We cannot refer to the Spirit apart from how we have come to know Him in Christ.

An important question is, if this Christological starting point is not too unbalanced. Does such a Christocentric approach in mission not overrule any other perspective? Is it in my model still possible to relate the particular and critical story of Christ to the wider reality of this world?⁷ Can we somehow bring together the critical moment of the Cross of Christ and the plurality of people with different cultures and religions. Or is that in a

⁵ Vgl. Reitsma, blz. 117-118, 159, 160.

⁶ Christ was also bearer of the Spirit. H. Berkhof has pointed this out in his *Christian Theology*, Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans 2004, second edition and his *De leer van de Heilige Geest*, Nijkerk 1964. However, even that work of the Spirit can only be approached from the end. The Spirit that led Christ into the wilderness and filled Him with His presence is the Spirit that through Christ was sent into the world and started to work in a new and complete way in the world.

⁷ That has always been the criticism of the Orthodox tradition of the filioque in the Nicene creed. That would leave too little room for the universal and independent work of the Spirit in creation and practically identifies the Spirit with Christ. The Spirit then becomes just another word for Christ.

Christocentric approach simply impossible. Would a more Trinitarian model not be more helpful?⁸

In my view the problem is not so much a Christocentric - or better: Christ-centered - approach, but a Christomonistic approach. Christomonism basically states that Christ is the single and only representation of God. There is no more God than Christ. That does not leave room for a Trinitarian view of God and should indeed be renounced as heretic. A Christocentric or Christ-centered approach, however, does not contradict a Trinitarian understanding of God. It just emphasizes that God can only be known through Christ, that He revealed himself ultimately and fully in Him. When we emphasize Christ as the centre it is an epistemological approach, not an ontological approach. Christ and God do not completely coincide.

A Christomonistic approach indeed does not leave any room for the contextuality of theology, nor for the importance of different cultures and situations. Christocentrism, however, does, at least as long as *Christ* is truly the center of our thinking and not our Western, Eastern or Southern *ideas* and *interpretations* of Christ.⁹ Who *Christ* really is, can only be revealed together with all cultures and contexts. Moreover, the identity of God in Christ will even receive clearer distinctness in the encounter with other religions. In this way we will also become aware of our the contextuality of our own theology.

The fundamental question therefore remains how the Spirit of Christ is present in the world, in cultures and religions. There is a tension between the confession that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and the claim that the Spirit works in the whole cosmos, since this whole cosmos is still the place where the powers of the old aeon are present. In the light of Romans 8 I would say that the Spirit, that is at work in the whole creation, is the Spirit of Christ and can therefore not simply be identified with everything that takes place in a creation where the powers of the old age are still at large.¹⁰ It is especially here that there is a danger of spiritual colonialism, of annexing the Spirit with our own ideologies and views, of identifying the work of the Spirit with our work. Throughout history almost everything has been claimed as Spiritually justified, from slavery to the abolition of slavery, from apartheid to the ending of apartheid, from communism to the fall of the Berlin wall, from capitalism to socialism. In this way the Spirit is in danger of becoming an anti-spirit.¹¹

It is only in the light of the cross that we can see how God is present in this world. What the world perceives as the end, for God is the beginning. Living for God starts with dying to the world. Only through death God's Kingdom is realized. And only who acknowledges that God works where no one expects it and no one will recognize it, will discover something of the work of the Spirit in the whole cosmos.

3. Non-Christian spirituality and the Spirit of Christ

In this context we understand religious experience as something that touches the deeper

⁸ Cf. Van 't Kruis, p. 14,15, 85, 87

⁹ The danger that christocentric universalism is identified with Western thinking is still real, but is not only a Western problem. All cultures struggle with the tension between their culturally influenced interpretation of the Gospel and the essence of the Gospel. It is true, however, that especially the West needs to be alert, because of its history and the still seemingly dominant position of western theology in the world.

¹⁰ Cf. Reitsma, p. 118, 168-171.

¹¹ Cf. the profound reasoning of K. Barth in KD III/1 S. 115-120, esp. S. 118, 119; cf. Reitsma, p. 51-53.

levels of one's existence. It is not something in which people are unconsciously subject to an outside force, in which their personality is temporarily taken over. That might be possible, but is not the norm. Even someone who could be called possessed, frantic or under influence, is not without some form of control. Whenever we consider the relationship between the Spirit and religious experiences, it is important to realize this. Experience is not simply the sign that the Spirit is working as if the Spirit is not working when people lack these experiences. The Spirit never completely takes over our individuality. That is first of all given with the distinction between God and creation. The Creator and the creation can never be completely identified and remain distinct. Secondly, in line with Jesus' statement that His Kingdom cannot be forced upon people (John 18:36), the Spirit will always respect the freedom and individuality of each person. Spiritual experiences therefore always are a *human* response to the work of God; it is an interaction between humanity and the divine.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion and central to it is the confession that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Kor. 8:4-6), Creator of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of Jesus Christ. Christianity has also always confessed to the omnipresence of God: this Creator is present everywhere through his Spirit. If both premises are true, then we cannot escape the conclusion that all religious experiences somehow have to be connected/related to God in some way as well. The question is: how? My thesis is that religious experiences are all human responses to the presence and the work of God through his Spirit in this world. There are only two other options. Either religious experiences are purely internal human and psychological phenomena, or they are occurrences that are inspired by the Evil one, although even then we could not consider this as completely outside of a person's individuality. Both suggestions might have a kernel of truth, but do not exclude my claim that all religious experiences somehow are reaction to God's presence.

Even when religious experience is a purely psychological phenomenon and people are completely isolated from external influence, they are still responding to God's presence, albeit by secluding themselves from His loving presence. It is still the experience of people who are created by God and for God and who can only live on the breath of His Spirit. That is confirmed by the fact that certain psychological phenomena have a religious flavor. Anthropology and Psychology imply Theology.

In a different way, the same obtains for viewing religious experience as the work of the evil one. Apart from the fact that it is impossible to reduce all non-Christian religions and their religious experience to Satan, even then Satanism is also a reaction to the Creator, but in an antithetical and adversative way. It is the complete rejection of the one and only true God. It is the experience in which people completely seclude themselves from Him and open themselves up for the evil one. And even this creature only lives by the grace of God's mercy and longsuffering.

When we assert that religious experiences are reactions to God's presence in this world, it does not imply, that all these experiences are 'good' or 'true' or contain 'truth', or even that they are inspired by the Spirit of God. My point is, that they somehow have to do with the Spirit of God. However, as long as Christ is excluded from these experiences, we have to emphasize that they are imperfect or incomplete or even deformed and corrupted. After all, the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and where Christ is absent, the source of all spirituality is fading. Through the flesh, the self, or the misleading of Satan or the influence of sin the source of the Spirit can even become unrecognizable. A rebellious

heart, persistent presuppositions or past occurrences or traumas could hinder a person to really acknowledge and experience the depth of God's nature and character in Christ. He is after all the final and ultimate revelation of God's being and only in Him all religious experiences find their true meaning. It is in this respect interesting to notice that God continues to bestow all human beings with his goodness. 'For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust' (Mat 5:45). In analogy, the same can be said about spiritual experiences. The question is how human beings respond to this goodness of God. Paul emphasizes that the root problem in the world is, that human beings do not acknowledge God's goodness: they do not honor him as God or give thanks to him (Rom. 1:21).

As we have seen in Romans 8 the Spirit works in a double way. On the one hand He establishes the new life in Christ; on the other He convicts the old life outside of Christ as sinful and corrupted. New life only dawns at the other side of the grave, through death, in baptism. Therefore, we could also conclude that the Spirit works in a double way in relation to religious experiences. On the one hand, whenever the Spirit evokes religious responses in people, He always points people to Christ and directs them to Him. The Spirit wants people to experience the blessings of Christ. And whoever opens up to the presence of the Spirit will find that Christ will become more central in life. Christ is and remains the benchmark for all experiences. By Him they are being tested, purified, cleansed and renewed.

On the other hand, the work of the Spirit also convicts experiences that are void of Christ. The coming of the Spirit is never only affirming, it also creates a crisis. Every experience that conflicts with the fullness of the Gospel in Jesus Christ will be critiqued by the cross. What is believed or experienced is not neutral. Every corrupted and imperfect experience needs to be renewed. Wherever the Spirit is at work and receives space, there will always be a breaking point as well. A transition from a non-Christian religion to faith in Christ always involves a turning point. It is never simply smoothly and fluently.

This break with the past does not, however, imply that the past is erased. How much the transition to faith in Christ is through dying and rising with Christ, an individual with all his experiences remains recognizable/does not lose his or her identity. Simon Peter might have been a completely new person after Pentecost, we can still distinguish Peter and his character and identity. The same is true for Paul, who after his conversion on the road to Damascus, still displays a similar zeal as before, but now as a regenerated person for Christ. Radically new as it is, in the recreation God does not start all over again, as if there has not been anything before.¹² Through baptism there is both continuity and discontinuity in the life of the believer. The same obtains in my view for spiritual experiences from the past. They will not completely be set aside, but renewed. As the grain of wheat needs to die in order to bear fruit, likewise the religious experiences of individuals need to die with Christ in order to bear fruit for Him. It is *their* specific experiences that die with them in Christ, but it is also true that *these same* experiences will be raised again with Christ. That can even be true of certain outright negative experiences, in which people have secluded themselves completely from God. These experiences can become meaningful exactly in their adversative character. The light of the Spirit can project a new image from this negative picture and in this way even these experiences can through dying with Christ

¹² Cf. Reitsma, p. 172.

become reflections of God's glory. As Paul's religious zeal was first against Christ, it later became a completely new passion for Christ.

4. Concluding remarks.

1. In the light of the above we should wonder whether a Christian encounter with Muslims at the level of spirituality should not have more priority above a dogmatic and apologetic confrontation. This is not meant as a softer approach, as if experiences are always true. Neither is it a pluralistic approach, in which all experiences equal reflections of the Divine. On the contrary. Experiences should be open to critique and testing. Nevertheless, religion starts with the heart, with the conviction and experience that faith in God provides an answer to the daily questions and struggles of life.¹³ In mission heart to heart encounters are in general much more valuable than dogmatic discussions. The latter tend to start from previously taken positions and rarely convince people of the beauty of Christ. It is important to acknowledge that every spiritual experience one way or another is related to the presence of the Spirit of God in this world. It expresses respect for and appreciation of the fact that many people are sincerely seeking the one true God and desire to know Him, in order to understand the meaning of life and to find an answer to the fundamental fear of death, pain and suffering. It is especially in a faith encounter that the Spirit is able to reveal the difference between true and surrogate experiences. This requires more of the partners in such a meeting. It is impossible at this level to hide behind dogma's, stereotypes or memorized answers. It is all about integrity: does faith really make a difference in their daily lives or is it just an empty box, an emotional drug, or a theoretical and dogmatic truth, that does not really affect them. What does trust in Christ imply when life is getting tough, when disappointments and sorrow, pain and suffering cross our paths? Does it make any difference in our lives that we believe that Christ is the only way, the truth and the life? You will recognize the tree by its fruit (Mat. 7:20), hypocrisy can not remain hidden.

With this approach we do not abandon our fundamental truths. In meeting with Muslims there will not only be moments of recognition, but also of substantial estrangement. The work of the Spirit is always directed towards Christ, urging people to follow and experience Him. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

2. When Muslims pray they pray to God from within their own tradition. Apart from the obligated Salat, one of the foundations of Islam, Muslims are also encouraged to pray their own private free prayers. Although Muslims might be able to pray several psalms and prayers from the Bible without any problem, it is impossible to pray in Jesus name. That implies a kind of faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ and his work. Nevertheless, many Muslims can testify to prayers that have been answered: a child might be healed, a job provided, food received. How should we appreciate/regard such answered prayers in the

¹³ S.P. Steinhaus, 'The Spirit-first approach to Muslim Evangelism' in: *International Journal of Frontier Mission*, 17/4 (2003), pp 404-417, explores a focus on the work of the Spirit in opposition to a dogmatic/confessional approach. Although in general a Spirit approach does not in itself contradict a confessional approach, Steinhaus points out that many things that Christians would mention about their faith when meeting Muslims, will easily be cut off or denied, whether it is the Trinity, Jesus the Son of God, or faith in cross and resurrection. Therefore relating to Muslims on a personal level, talking about the Spirit of God or sharing personal stories of faith, can be much more fruitful and rewarding. Apart the personal aspect, Islam is in relating to Christianity much less outspoken in the area of pneumatology than in Christology.

light of the work of the Spirit. Can we say that it is God who answered their prayers, that the Spirit was somehow active? Sometimes the only alternative to this response is to attribute the answered prayers to the work of the evil one. Apart from the fact that scripture does not seem to attribute such powers to satan, it does not count with the sovereignty of God. For Him to answer prayers is not restricted to only the faithful in Christ, or the perfect believers. God does not answer prayers because of the great faith of the believer, or his wonderful words and prayers (cf. Matt. 6:7, 8). It is only God's sovereign grace that is the rationale for answered prayers and that grace is determined by the work of Christ. Therefore it is more plausible/reasonable that those who know Christ and pray in His name, i.e. are connected to what He has done, will pray according to God's will than those who are estranged from him. Still this does not mean that God cannot and does not hear the prayers of those who do not know him in Christ. Otherwise what Paul, quoting the Old Testament, says in Romans 10 would not be true, that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:13). For if they need salvation, they are not faithful covenant members and if they have already been saved, they do not need to call upon the Lord. The difference between believers in Christ and others, is that believers are able to recognize answered prayers as God's gift. They will honor and thank Him for that and it will draw them closer to God in Christ. That is the work of the Spirit. Others might not understand their answered prayers as gifts from God and therefore will not acknowledge him and honor him for that. They don't even realize that God is at work and attribute their experiences to other forces or influences, which in turn occupy their lives. Therefore, as with all spiritual experiences, also answered prayers need interpretation and sifting. In order to understand what is from God and what is not, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. In this respect God's spiritual gifts are not different from all the other gifts he bestows on believers and unbelievers alike, from 'life' as such to health and food.

3. We have argued that when someone comes to faith in Christ, the experiences from the past are not simply erased or set aside, but will so to speak be regenerated in Baptism. Through death they obtain a new place in a renewed way in the new spiritual experience. That implies that for these believers there should be space to experience their new faith in the context of their own character, history and culture. They will have to find their own way and form of their spiritual life. Acknowledging cultural diversity is also a recognition of the work of the Spirit in religious experiences of non-Christians. However, at the same time, the Spirit also assesses their culture and character in order to transform them. This is very important for the 'insider's movement'-debate.

In this respect especially Westerners should be restrained. Too often they have confused the work of the Spirit with their own culture and have imposed their experiences arrogantly. Transmission of the gospel often involved conveyance of their own traditions, creeds and dogmas. This is a challenge for Christians all over the world, to serve God from within and with the aid of their own culture, without compromising the work of the Spirit of Christ.

4. All of this implies that not only other religions are being convicted by the Spirit of Christ in relation to the cross of Christ, but Christianity itself as well. After all, it is not the Christian faith that saves, but Christ. Christians are also human beings that respond to the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world. They cannot automatically claim that their personal and human experience of the divine is beyond critique, simply because they are Christian. Even Christians are imperfect, hindered by human and cultural limitations and

are not completely released from every influence of sin. It is exactly in the confrontation with the spiritual experiences of others that they themselves are being examined and assessed and that blind spots can be revealed. That in itself is a superb medicine against any form of colonialism in mission.

When it is Christ who saves and not Christianity, we also must emphasize that it is not the Western image of Christ who saves. Of course we can only know Christ in a specific culture and that is not wrong in itself, as long as we realize that this is not the fullness of Christ. Jesus Christ cannot simply be identified with our image of him. It is only together with believers from all cultures that we can start to understand who Christ really is. It is only with all the saints that we can comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, in order that we may be filled with the fullness of God (Eph. 3:18, 19).

5. Because of all of this, we need to make room in our Christian traditions for a variety of faith expressions and experiences. People respond to God's presence in this world in a very diverse way; that obtains likewise for people responding to God's presence in Christ. Even within one church people can experience and express their one faith in Jesus Christ in a wide variety of ways. None of this is disqualified as illegitimate in advance. Not one spiritual experience, from very conservative to extremely charismatic, from evangelical to liturgical can claim to be the one and only unique experience of the Gospel. Therefore a plea for diversity is at the same time a plea for Christian unity. It is my dream that one day sober Calvinists will celebrate God's glory together with exuberant Evangelicals and with Muslim followers of Christ. Only together we can avoid the pitfall of partiality and sectarianism. For whenever we come together in all our diversity, we create a workspace for the Spirit to sharpen and renew us.