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# Karl Barth's Christological anthropology as a basis for building an interreligious relationship

## ABSTRACT

*This article shows that Barth's Christological anthropology can contribute to conversations about interreligious relations. Using constructive analysis methods, this article begins with an analysis of Barth's Christological anthropology. A thorough observation of Barth's Christological anthropology reveals that his theology provides a potential basis for a theological concept of interreligious relations. The theological concept of interreligious relations, based on Barth's Christological anthropology, affirms that the most fundamental commonality between Christians and other religious people lie in the fact that they are God's chosen human beings in Jesus Christ as partners of the covenant with God and with others. This theological concept of interreligious relations can guide Christians in relating to other religious groups, while they can also remain faithful to witness Jesus Christ as the centre of the message of true humanity.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, conversations about Barth and religion start with the search for sections about revelation and religion, and the doctrine of Reconciliation in Barth's theology (Harrison 1986; Green 1995; Di Noia 2000; Weinrich 2020). Jesus Christ as the real man is the starting point to examine our humanity, the ontological determination of real man (to be with God) and real humanity (to be with other human beings) as the

basic structure and content of Barth's anthropology. These two concepts are founded on the doctrine of election and the humanity of Jesus Christ. Rather than being irrelevant, Barth's Christological anthropology can also provide related constructive thinking about religions, particularly the relationship between Christians and people of other religions. Religion lacks a universally agreed-upon definition. Various scholars, including philosophers, sociologists, and theologians, have provided definitions. Kant (1960:142) defines religion as "the recognition of all duties as divine commands". Durkheim (1995:44) defines religion as

a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

Tillich (1963:6) understands religion as

the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life.

Religion is difficult to define; some experts even choose not to provide a definition of religion because they opine that religion is impossible to define (Stausberg & Gardiner 2016:10).

Keller argues that Barth's Christological anthropology – not his concept of religion – is normative for his implicit view of the status of religions (Harrison 1986:210). In fact, the awareness of bringing together Barth's Christological anthropology with the issue of interreligious relations has occupied the minds of some theologians. Scott (1986:556) observes that Barth's Christological anthropology could provide constructive insight into the relationship between Christians and people of other religions. He mentions that, if a theologian believes that what is true and valid in all human lives is based on Jesus Christ, s/he is encouraged to move towards secular experience in the light of Christ and gain fresh insights into the daily lives of both Christians and other religious groups. According to Benjamin Durheim, interreligious dialogue could be a valuable topic to explore in Barth's Christological anthropology. Ensminger expressed similar optimism.<sup>1</sup> Barth's theology about man can be a beneficial basis for Christians to live side by side with their neighbours from different religions (Ensminger 2014:215). This diverse awareness needs to be further developed in the treasures of Barth's anthropological and theological

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1 This is a very important topic since it is directly tied to how Christians regard other religious groups, including their re-understanding of the inclusive nature of Christology itself. Barth's Christological anthropology is a particularly important topic because of this tight relationship.

research in issues of interreligious relations. In the doctrine of anthropology and Christology, it is vital to outline the common ground and the point of departure in their dialogue up to the present.

## 2. BARTH'S CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Barth (1960:49) began his investigation into what it meant to be a human being with one definite starting point, namely Jesus Christ:

We need His (Jesus) humanity in order to be like Him as men ... Without Him we would not be what we are. What we are we must always seek in Him and receive from Him. Our Human nature rests upon His grace.

By looking at Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, a human being can generally understand what it means to be a true man. According to Barth, one of the reasons why Jesus Christ was the basis for understanding mankind has a strong influence on the doctrine of election. As Barth (1960:3) famously puts it, the doctrine of election is "[t]he whole of the Gospel, the Gospel in nuce". In his thinking, the doctrine of election is about Jesus Christ, who is the God who chose (electing God) and the man who was chosen (elected man).<sup>2</sup> He believes that the subject of election is not only the Father but also the Son. The Father and the Son are not separate from each other and are not only connected but also mutually conditioned. The personality of the Father cannot be understood independently of the Son's personality (Ka-fu Chan 1999:53). This disparity between the Father and the Son also concerns the disparity of their will. "There is no such thing as a will of God apart from the will of Jesus Christ" (Barth 1957:105). When the Father chooses, the Son chooses. The Son defines himself as the God who chose the man Jesus to be united with him (Barth 1957:103).

Another aspect of Barth's doctrine of election is that Jesus Christ is the chosen man. Barth (1957:116) confirms:

Jesus Christ does not stand alongside the rest of the elect, but before and above them as the One who is originally and properly the Elect.

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2 "Starting from Jn. 1.1f, we have laid down and developed two statements concerning the election of Jesus Christ. The first is that Jesus Christ is the electing God. This statement answers the question of the subject of the eternal election of grace. And the second is that Jesus Christ is the elected man. This statement answers the question of the object of the eternal election of grace. Strictly speaking, the whole dogma of predestination is contained in these two statements (Barth 1957:145).

God's election over man Jesus Christ is entirely original and unique, but also, in its uniqueness, very significant and universally effective. The election of Jesus Christ affects not only a group of people but also the whole of humanity (Barth 1957:117). Jesus Christ, the chosen man of God, is the representation of all mankind (Chung 2006:72). In his election of man, Jesus Christ, God also chose all mankind to be partners in his covenant. God has determined that all humanity should be partners in the covenant with him through the election of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the God of the covenant also wants and demands something from man as his partner in the covenant (Barth 1957:11). God's chosen man, Jesus Christ, is called to live life as a partner of the covenant by the will and order of God himself. Man can participate as a partner in the covenant of God only because of the grace of God given to him free of charge (Barth 1957:411). God has chosen man as a partner in the covenant based on his love and has given man space to respond to him. The freedom given to man by God enables him to respond to God's call to himself. This means that man should let himself be loved by God, be thankful to God, and rejoice in his love (Krötke 2000:164). God has acted as a partner who wants the election of men so that they can respond to the election with the freedom given to him (Krötke 2000:164).

As a partner in the covenant, man is empowered by God to participate in the communion of the covenant, which God has eternally and historically established in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Hart 2013:43).

It is indisputable that Barth's thought on the doctrine of election affirms the universal aspect of God's election in Christ, where every human being is chosen in Jesus Christ. However, Barth means election, not in the sense of salvation, but as the determinant nature of humanity. Every human being, consciously or unconsciously, has been chosen in Jesus Christ to be a partner of the covenant, not yet in the form of a "promise" of election (O'Neil 2004:323). The value and dignity of man do not lie in the fact that he is a creation of God, but in the fact that he has chosen God in Jesus Christ as a partner in the covenant.

The doctrine of Barth's election affirms that Jesus Christ became a source of knowledge for all mankind to understand their true humanity as partners in God's covenant. It is interesting to note, according to Barth, that the human nature of man as a partner in the covenant applies not only to the Christian community, but also to those outside the Christian community:

My point in anthropology is that every man is a virtual brother of Christ, because the whole world is healed in and through Christ ... Because there is no man without Christ ... we may say that there is no reality of manhood apart from Him. However, humanity does not begin only in Christ. If it begins there, it is only because man discovers truth, because he discovers Christ ... Even before he becomes a Christian he is in continuity with God in Christ, but he has not yet discovered it. He realizes it only when he begins to believe (Barth 1963:15).

In this statement, Barth insists that every human being of any religion receives the impact of the universal reconciliation by Jesus Christ so that they are all connected with God. Barth expresses this in an interesting way: Every human being is a brother of Christ. This expression implies the existence of a strong human bond between man and Christ himself. Human beings will never attain their true humanity apart from the humanity of Christ. Even Barth radically states that there is no man without Christ. Thus, every human being is within God's determination in Jesus Christ, namely designated as a partner in the covenant of God. Because of its inclusive nature, God's election in Jesus Christ transcends existing differences, including religious differences. The universal election of mankind in Jesus Christ poses a challenge to the Christian community. Barth himself urges Christians to approach everyone from any religion with the belief that they are also chosen (Barth 1957:318). Those to whom God has bestowed his good will are to share in the abundance of his own life and love (Barth 1958:363-364). Both Christians and people of other religions are with God and in the history of the covenant that God has established in Jesus Christ. In light of the humanity of Jesus Christ, their humanity is directed to God. Their humanity can be called true humanity when they live as covenant partners responding to God's call with expressions of gratitude and responsibility.

In addition to being a partner in the covenant with God, man is also called by God in Christ to be a partner in the alliance with his neighbour. Barth believes that the life of Jesus Christ provides theological truth about the basic form of humanity, that is, man as being in encounter:

The minimal definition of our humanity, of humanity generally, must be that it is the being of man in encounter, and in this sense the determination of man as a being with the other man (Barth 1960:247).

According to Barth, the similarity between Jesus' humanity and universal humanity lies in the basic form of humanity as being with and for one another (co-humanity, co-existence).

If the humanity of Jesus consists in the fact that He is for other men, this means that for all the disparity between Him and us He affirms there others as beings which are not merely unlike Him in His creaturely

existence and therefore His humanity, but also like him in some basic form. Where one being is for others, there is necessarily a common sphere or form of existence in which the 'for' can be possible and effective (Barth 1960:223).

To be a true man in light of the humanity of Jesus Christ means to be a being for one another, a being who does not live in alienation but in association with one another. A man becomes who he really is when he chooses to be in a relationship with his neighbour. On the contrary, man does not become who he really is when he refuses to live with his neighbour.

"Encounter" is the most fundamental predicate of the existence of a human being (Barth 1960:247). The human "I" is always formed in the "I-Thou" relationship. When someone says: "I am a human" (I am), it means "I'm in the encounter". Barth's use of the term "encounter" between the "I" and the "Thou" emphasises the individuality of each human being and to defend themselves as individual subjects (Mikkelsen 2010:108). In addition, the use of the phrase "an I-Thou encounter" also demonstrates that human existence is not a static being but a dynamic one (Mikkelsen 2010:109). According to Barth, human encounter consist of four important categories: seeing eye-to-eye, exchanging speech and hearing, giving and receiving assistance, and doing all these things in a spirit of gladness (Barth 1960:250-274).

This brief exposition of Barth's thoughts enables us to understand that the whole picture of man as revealed in the humanity of Jesus Christ must consist of a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with one another. Man is called to be a partner not only in the covenant with God, but also in the covenant with his neighbour.

### 3. CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIP

Barth's Christological anthropology can provide theological concepts for Christians to understand the status of people of other religions. Not only Christians, but also people of other religions are chosen by God in Jesus Christ as partners in the covenant. Their true human nature as partners in the covenant – which is found only in the humanity of Jesus Christ – is the truth God has bestowed on them.

In Christ, that divine determination of human existence proves to be gracious and merciful. God thinks more highly of us than we are likely to think of ourselves (Scott 1986:550).

Only by looking at Jesus Christ, can Christians and other religious groups find the meaning of their lives as partners in the covenant with both God and others.

The theological concept of interreligious relations based on Barth's Christological anthropology affirms that it does not suffice to view people of other religions as objects of God's creation who have inherent merit and dignity so that they deserve to be respected and appreciated. Moreover, their human dignity is based on the fact that they are partners in the covenant chosen by God in Jesus Christ. They are subjects who can actively respond to God's calling and who may actively choose to live with their neighbour. The theological emphasis that people of other religions are active subjects connected with God and others affirms another important aspect: they are beings called by God to accomplish God's purposes in the world. In other words, these people are included by God to uphold human values amidst the incidents of inhumanity that frequently occur in the world.

The acknowledgment that people of other religions are active subjects connected with God and fellow men does not eliminate the fact that they are also subjected to a different historical particularity from the historical specificity of Christians. According to Barth, it is impossible to talk about man without talking about his human history. In the context of interreligious relations, the historical particularities of people of other religions can be interpreted as their religious particularities. Religious particularity means that each religious community has a particular doctrine and practice of beliefs that are different from each other. These differences are due to the fact that each religious community lives in a different historical context. In this regard, Farhadian (2015:1) reveals that

[w]e all live in contexts. We are contextual beings. No matter where we live, what we believe, or how we practice our faith, our contexts profoundly impact our formation as people.

The differences in religious doctrines and practices are due to the fact that many religious teachings have been developed in historical contexts for specific reasons and purposes: environmental, geographical, economic, social, political, and technological.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Even according to Samsiyatun (2019:10), one religion is developed and applied differently according to a particular context. In the context of the Southeast Asian region, Buddhism has been understood, developed, and applied in varying ways in Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia, for example. The Bali Hindus perform rituals, and create doctrines that differ from those of the Hindus in Singapore.

Christians must recognise the religious particularity of people of other religions in the context of interreligious relations. When meeting people of other religions, Christians are not dealing with abstract people, but with concrete people with a particular system of beliefs. Religious particularity is an inseparable part of the humanity of people of other religions. Therefore, Christians cannot deliberately remove the humanity of people of other religions from the roots of their inherent religiosity.

The affirmation of universal similarities between Christians and other religious groups should not diminish their individual religious differences. On the other hand, religious particularities do not necessarily serve as a pretext for isolating one another and forcing hostility between Christians and other religious groups. According to Moore (2006:73), religious particularity is an important aspect of creating "deepness" in a meeting between religious groups. What religious people really have is their religious commitment, and without it, they do not have much to share in each other's encounter.

Barth's Christological anthropology enables a balanced viewpoint to emphasise the similarities and differences between Christians and other religious groups. Such a balanced view is beneficial to Christians, in order to avoid religious superiority over other religious people. Concerning this, Sanneh (1992:91) once revealed that a person's rejection of his or her neighbour's religious particularity often shows the presence of subtle imperialism in that person. Christians should avoid this.

The theological concept of interreligious relations, based on Barth's Christological anthropology, affirms the attitude of Christian openness to other religious groups. Greggs (2008:88) reveals that, in his Christological anthropology, Barth wanted to emphasise that Christ-oriented Christians look outwards toward God and the world:

Part of this radical outwardness and orientation to others must surely include those of other faiths to whose humanity Christ belongs. The Christian Church must never be a merely inward-looking entity (Greggs 2008:88).

Just as Christ showed true openness to God and others, a Christian should view him-/herself as a being who always directs him-/herself outwardly, first to God, and then to his/her neighbour who is of another religion.

Deddo (2015:99) observes how a Christian should behave towards his fellow religious person in light of Barth's Christological anthropology:

As God in Jesus Christ is our covenant-partner so we in our humanity are to be covenant-partner with other. We must be so in a further sense because all other persons are also partners with God. Because God in



His relations with others gives them personal being in correspondence with his own personal being, that is God addresses all human beings as Thou, then I too must acknowledge the other as a Thou, as one in covenant relation with God. To deny their 'thou-ness,' their personhood, is to deny their relation[ship] with God. Furthermore, this is to deny the reality of my own covenant relation with God.

The way in which Christians treat their neighbours of other religions should reflect the way in which God treats them with grace. When Christians refuse to acknowledge the existence of their neighbours of other religions, they are denying the vertical dimension of others' relationships with God, and negating their own vertical relationship with God because their vertical relationship with God should be in line with their horizontal relationship with each other.

### 3.1 Combating religious stereotypes

The theological concept of interreligious relations, based on Barth's Christological anthropology affirms that coexistence is the embodiment of the idea that man is a partner in the covenant with his neighbour. Coexistence is an essential aspect of building relationships between religious people. However, the term "coexistence" is often considered superficial. As an example, Darmaputera (1990:31) reveals that, under the principle of coexistence, people of different religions do live together, but there is no real sense of "community".

Of course they engage themselves in many common actions, yet there is no true 'inter-action'. They speak with one another, yet there is no true 'inter-action' (Darmaputera 1990:31).

There is no great desire within a person to build a close relationship with his neighbour of another religion.<sup>4</sup> According to him, the principle of coexistence is not strong enough to encourage religious people to build reciprocal relationships.

The meaning of coexistence in Barth's thinking is not as moderate as what Darmaputera understands. In Barth's view, coexistence is a form of human life that is the opposite of self-isolation. In fact, a coexisting human being rejects the expressions "It's not my business" and "This is not your business". Barth (1960:251) insists that the expression is wrong because it is based on the assumption that the existence of another person is not important, and that my existence is not important to that person. Both Christians and other religious groups have their true human nature as partners in covenant with each other, so that none of them can live without the other.

4 Expression that arises from the principle of living coexistence: "I live my life and you live yours." or "Don't disturb me and I won't disturb you." (Darmaputera 1990:31).

The previous section mentioned Barth's view of the four categories of encounter: seeing eye-to-eye, exchanging speech and hearing, giving and receiving assistance, and doing all these things in a spirit of gladness. This view is especially useful in preventing the emergence of religious stereotypes, which are the root of conflict between religions. The first category "seeing eye-to-eye" talks about openness with one another. Openness to one another is the most fundamental aspect on which to build interreligious relationships, based on the four categories of Barth's concept of encounter. Barth (1960:251) reveals that, in a meeting, there must be a dual movement between the two parties to open up. Creating open relationships requires the humility of both Christians and other religious groups to open themselves to each other. By opening up, they are willing to put themselves in an equal position. No one can claim to be superior to another. The awareness that Christians and other religious people are equally chosen by God in Jesus Christ as their partners in the covenant should not make Christians feel superior to others. Instead, this awareness creates a strong sense of solidarity between Christians and other religious groups because they are brothers in Jesus Christ. If a Christian is reluctant to open him-/herself to his/her other religious neighbour, s/he will become an inhuman human being. By opening up to him-/herself, the Christian lives his/her human nature in light of the humanity of Jesus Christ as a subject living with one another.

Openness is an essential introduction to the creation of open communication between Christians and other religious groups. Barth (1960:253) insists that, without open communication, there is no integrity in recognition because recognition is based only on the point of view of one person interpreting the other. This means that Christians need to ask other religious people about who they are instead of telling them about who they are from a Christian perspective: "Is my view of yourself depicting who you really are? Can you help me know your true self?". Interreligious communication also requires humility on the part of Christians to ask their other religious neighbours to correct their views on who they really are. Therefore, both Christians and other religious groups need to apply the principle of speaking and listening, in order to deepen each other's knowledge, so that there is no room for religious stereotypes to develop between them.

Christians and other religious groups can reveal their respective identities by sharing their life stories to deepen each other's acquaintance. One of the life stories that can be shared is a bitter experience that caused conflict in the past. Barth (1960:254) reveals the truth: speaking and listening are essential elements to transcending visible boundaries. By sharing life stories, both Christians and people of other religions are encouraged to learn to understand the "inner side" of their neighbour's life, which is not seen simply

by looking “from a distance”. In sharing each other’s stories, it is important to be honest and to show the real self. According to Barth, sometimes words can be used to build a false self-image. Barth also stresses that listening carefully is an integral part of this stage of communication. Christians need to listen attentively to the stories of their neighbours from other religions as a form of sincerity to know them more deeply.

Furthermore, the encounter between Christians and other religious groups should culminate in an attitude of interdependence, *i.e.*, both parties are willing to help and be helped. As Barth describes, dependency is like a fish that needs water. The more Christians recognise their neighbours of other religions, the deeper the bond, the sense of empathy, and the desire to stretch out their hands to help. On the other hand, it must be realised that the Christian being helped by his fellow from other religions is not less valuable than his willingness to help. Then Christians should be helped to show humility in acknowledging that they are vulnerable and unable to live without one another.

The three categories of Barth’s encounters in the context of interreligious relationships are inhuman acts, if they are not “packed” with the last category, gladness. Gladness is the “soul” in a Christian encounter with people of other religions. Barth affirms that gladness is the deepest part of both Christians and people of other religions. Everything done in the encounter between them should radiate from a glad and free heart to open up to each other without being coerced by the other. In the encounter between Christians and other religious groups, there should be no hidden negative feelings or agendas. The gladness radiated in the encounter should come from within a sincere and authentic self.

Based on the understanding of coexistence described in the four categories of Barth’s concept of encounter, the relationship between Christians and other religious groups need to emphasise the openness of each other, speaking and listening, giving and receiving each other’s help, and doing all this in shared gladness. If religious stereotypes do not give room for others to reveal or introduce their true selves, coexistence gives sufficient room for someone to reveal or introduce who s/he really is. In order to have such a reciprocal and authentic encounter, it is essential to be humble, especially the Christian, to give his neighbour as much opportunity as people of other religions can offer. Not only at the stage of acquaintance, coexistence aims to create a space of sharing in which an interdependent life is created and forms a close bond of friendship between Christians and other religious communities marked by mutual gladness.

The coexistence described in the four categories of Barth’s concept of encounter has a deeper meaning than religious tolerance. As expressed by Rosyada (2017), tolerance is a principle of life that requires different societies to

respect each other and allow others to pursue their religious traditions as they believe. According to Campbell (2015:125), tolerance can have a negative side; it can be easily interpreted as "I don't care what others do (or believe) as long as it doesn't bother me", an understanding that implies a lack of attention or interest in others. Therefore, multi-religious societies need a way of life that is more than simply religious tolerance. Barth's concept of "coexistence" could lead Christians, as Campbell (2015:125) reveals, to have a higher level of interest in other religious groups than the principle of living tolerance and a great concern for the well-being of the lives of people of other religions.

### 3.2 Christians as witnesses to true humanity

The encounter between Christians and other religious groups is not always balanced and reciprocal. If an imbalance occurs in a meeting, Barth encourages Christians to remain obedient and persistent in building relationships with other religious groups according to his four categories of encounter. The Christian persistence in building relationships – even uncertain or rejected – reflects Jesus Christ's free and constant giving of himself totally for his neighbour, even though he is rejected.

Barth also reminds Christians that their humanity is rooted in Jesus Christ. They have accepted the vision of humanity that God himself wants so that their human lives should no longer be moved by sin. The grace of God that has been manifested to Christians for free should not end for them. Barth's theological concept of interreligious relations based on Christological anthropology not only emphasises the concept of "coexistence" between Christians and other religious groups, but it also stresses the duty of Christians as witnesses to proclaim true humanity in Jesus Christ to all religious groups in the world through everyday encounters or relationships.

God sent Christians into the world to proclaim that all humanity, from any religious background, is called to be partners in God's covenant in Jesus Christ and to find the meaning of their lives by participating in God's call to be

witnesses, shining lights of hope, to all men. They have to make the promise known to them in its direct wording and sense as a call to faith (Barth 1981:270).

The hope of true humanity in Jesus Christ is good news that should also be preached to all beyond the church walls.

Christians are called to be a witness of the true humanity in Jesus Christ solely through the grace of God.

God's activity certainly takes place before their eyes and ears. But they do not see, nor hear, nor perceive ... The called – and this is the gift of vocation – come to know it by the action of the one who alone can enable them to do so (Barth 1962:575–576).

Although they are called by God to be his witnesses, they have no capacity within themselves to proclaim the good news of God to the world. Christians can be God's witnesses only because they participate in Christ's work in the world.

It is Christ who works in the world, but because they are in Christ and he is in them, they participate actively in his work (Barth 1962:600).

As fellow workers of Christ, Christians are empowered by Christ to be effective witnesses of God in the world.

Christians give their witness without arrogance or feeling superior to people of other religions, because their humanity is equal in Jesus Christ. Instead, the Christian witness must be delivered with respect and hospitality. According to Barth, the Christian witness must also be preached throughout the entire existence of a Christian.

It consists in the fact that with their whole being, action, inaction and conduct, and then by word and speech, they have to make a definite declaration to other men. The essence of their vocation is that God makes them His witnesses (Barth 1962:575).

According to Reichel (2020:334), in Barth's understanding, a Christian's entire existence has a missional dimension. That is to say, the Christian witness should be demonstrated throughout the entire existence of the Christian – through his/her words and daily practices – to present a form of true human life that has been manifested in Jesus Christ.

Regarding the Christian witness, Barth also reveals that suffering is an inseparable part of the Christian self as a witness to God. The ministry of witness that Christians perform in the world will bring them suffering. By being the Christian witness, Christians will find strong resistance from the sinful world. Christians are hated and persecuted by the world not because of their human individuality – personal attitudes or actions – but because they preach the name of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ told his disciples that the world will resist and hate them, because they are disciples of Christ (John 17:14) (Barth 1962:625). Barth (1962:618) reveals that one cannot become a Christian without experiencing and bearing the suffering caused by the work of the world around him/her. True Christians are always oppressed by the world around them.

Suffering as a consequence of a Christian witness can come from anywhere. One of them, according to Barth (1962:623), comes from other religious groups that oppressed Christians. According to Barth, when a Christian is persecuted because of the testimony s/he carries, s/he should not oppose or avenge those who have persecuted him/her. If s/he retaliates, the Christian will compromise him-/herself as a witness. Instead, according to Barth (1962:629), a Christian can confront the world only as a witness where all his/her actions depend on the truth and reality s/he witnessed.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Barth's Christological anthropology provides the foundations of thought as the basis for building theological concepts of interreligious relations. The concept of "interreligious relations", based on Barth's Christological anthropology, affirms the universal similarity between Christians and other religious groups as subjects who can actively respond to God's calling and actively choose to live with their neighbours. However, these similarities do not deny the distinction between the religious particularities of Christians and those of other religious groups.

The theological concept of "interreligious relations", based on Barth's Christological anthropology, affirms the concept of "coexistence", which can be used mainly as a "weapon" of resistance to religious stereotypes. Rather than giving no room for others to express themselves, Barth's concept of coexistence attempts to give a great space for people of other religions to be themselves. A space for sharing is created where Christians and other religious groups can live side by side and depend on each other. The theological concept of "interreligious relations", based on Barth's Christological anthropology, also affirms the imperative aspect of the Christian mission, in which Christians are called by God to be his witnesses in this world to show the vision of true humanity that has been manifested in Jesus Christ. His theology is a stepping stone to Christian interreligious dialogue.

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