AOSIS

'Holiness' and faith practice today: A contribution towards interreligious dialogue

CrossMark
click for updates

Authors:
John-Charles Stay[1]
Tanya van Wyk[1]
Yolanda Dreyer[2]

Affiliations:
[1]Department of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

[2]Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Tanya van Wyk,
tanya.vanwyk@up.ac.za

The notion of 'holiness' has a long history of interpretation. In many ways, it is an ambivalent term. On the one hand, it denotes moral integrity by distinction, or 'being set apart'. This 'distinction' brought with it a pejorative interpretation of 'holiness' as denoting some sort of hierarchical moral exclusivism, attainable only by a minority. However, holiness is an essential aspect of spirituality and in this regard it has a rich and dynamic meaning. This article aims to reappropriate 'holiness' for ordinary human beings in their everyday lives and to transcend the exclusivist connotations attached to the concept by broadening the idea and application of 'holiness' as it is found in the Christian faith tradition. In this article, the emerging church movement (ECM) shall be considered with the purpose of introducing discussions regarding holiness in faith practice today. This will be done in order to demonstrate its richness and usefulness as a key component of spiritualties today, with a specific focus on its contribution to interreligious dialogue.

Interdisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article represents interdisciplinary work related to systematic theology (ecclesiology), practical theology and spirituality (holiness and science of religion) perspectives. The authors consider a postmodern multi-religious context in relation to aspects of Christian spirituality and ecclesiology (holiness).

Keywords: holy; holiness; faith practice; interreligious dialogue; experience; comparative theology; spirituality; emerging church movement.

Introduction: 'Holy' and 'holiness' – Challenges towards interpretation

The term 'holiness' has a long history of interpretation. Traditionally, it refers to aspects of saintly devotion. It evokes a sense of mystery and awe (Ackermann 2014:101). Both 'holy' and 'holiness' are found extensively in the Scripture. In this regard, the word 'holy' is used to describe God, believers' relationship with God and people or objects that God has set aside for special use. The term or notion of 'piety' has sometimes been used as an accompanying notion (see, e.g., Shelley 2013; Thorsen 2008). 'Holy' can also indicate that someone or something deserves honourable mention. For instance, 'his holiness' refers to a high-ranking religious leader such as the pope. A characteristic of 'holiness' is that it supersedes the ordinary. With the term 'holy' someone or something is placed outside of the ordinary. It indicates a higher standard of both being and conduct, something that is aspired to. In the Christian tradition, the term 'holy' generally indicates believers' responsibility to strive to not settle for average moral character but strive to be better.

For a Christian believer, to be holy is to strive to become more and more like Jesus Christ, to become more obedient to God, to develop a pure heart and mind and to live a life that is completely devoted to God's service. Although a common term in the broader Christian tradition, 'holiness' is sometimes emphasised particularly within the framework of evangelical theology and then in a fairly narrow sense. For instance, it has been described as essentially 'a cutting off or separation from what is unclean and a consecration to what is pure' (Comfort & Elwell 2001:608; cf. Sproul 1998:32). The aim is that a separation must occur from whatever defiles, and a consecration to what is holy or pure. From this perspective, whatever is 'pure' should be embraced and that which is impure should be rejected or 'cut off'. God is seen as the one who transcends any limitations and is therefore referred to as 'transcendent holiness' (see Sproul 1998:32). In terms of spirituality, holiness has been described as 'the chief attribute of God and a quality to be developed in his [sic] people' (Comfort & Elwell 2001:608). If holiness is the main attribute of God, the question is whether holiness can also function in the faith practice of believers and if so, how.

Defining 'holiness' is not without its challenges. As Denise Ackerman (2014) has stated, she is more certain of what holiness *is not*, than what it *is*:

> Holiness is not a calling limited to the 'professionals', the spiritual elite, or the elect few. It is not about knowledge that I can pick up from books, though I do not dismiss the wisdom some writers bring to the subject. It is not about my pursuit of the Holy One. It is not a state of perfection or a sense of having arrived; it therefore does not require the impossible. It is not located in some spiritual realm removed from my earthbound life, neither is it a revised and edited version of everyday life. (p. 100)

Thus, there are challenges with regard to interpreting the notion of 'holiness' today. If holiness is reserved for God and those elect few who have been 'set apart for God' and 'set apart from corruption', which includes 'sin', 'worldliness' and 'the sinful nature' of human beings, then moral judgements are made that separate people. In postmodern thought, there is an awareness of the diversity that exists in this world and that 'different' should not be judged to be 'better' or 'worse'. The great variety of religions and cultures in the world all have their different rules and ideas of what it means to be holy. In postmodern times, the truth claims and value judgements of a modernist and positivistic paradigm have been superseded by language such as 'perspectives on truth', 'truths' and 'preference'. Language has changed as society has changed. It has therefore become necessary to 'intentionally diversify the language we use to describe and to explain holiness' (Hersey 2015:30).

The problem of relating the idea of holiness to faith practice today is that it is often perceived as unattainable, exclusivist and only possible for certain people or times of revival in history. Another problem with the term 'holiness' is that it might be considered as an outdated theological idea and may therefore be considered as less important, archaic and irrelevant. This problem can be overcome by either using a different term to describe the idea of holiness, which will fit better into the spirituality and faith practices of today, or, alternatively, the word 'holiness' can be retained and can be filled with a richer content, described and expressed in the language of contemporary spirituality (Ackermann 2014: 99–138). This is possible because of the rich and dynamic meaning of 'holiness' (Ackermann 2014:110–124).

Whatever way it is understood, 'holiness' continues to be of importance in the self-understanding of different faith communities across the world. It cannot easily be dismissed as irrelevant. This article attempts to broaden the idea and application of 'holiness' as it is found in the Christian faith tradition in order to demonstrate its richness and usefulness as a key component of spiritualties today, with a specific focus on its possible contribution to interreligious dialogue.

Adapting holiness for today: The emerging church movement

Holiness has been crucial in adding value to faith practice over many centuries. For instance, the Wesleyan and Holiness Movement grew from John Wesley's emphasis on holiness, which he often referred to as Christian Perfection (see Levterov 2013:301; cf. Outler 1964:30). He was influenced not only by the Scriptures and his contemporaries but also by the Church Fathers and spiritualities such as the Quakers, Quietists, Reformers, Puritans and Pietists. Ascetic Spirituality suggested holiness as being physical separation from the society and the wickedness associated with it. Reformed Spirituality was founded on the Protestant Reformation and emphasises the importance of reforming to conservative views of the Scripture in order to spiritually cleanse the institutionalised church and individual Christians from corruption. Puritan Spirituality extended this beyond the church into family and community life, emphasising piety or purity as essential for a Christian and to Christianise society at large. Pentecostal Spirituality emphasised the importance of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in order to sanctify a believer's life. The Holiness Tradition and spiritualities such as the Ascetic, Reformed, Puritan and Pentecostal strains have all, through the ages, sought to redirect and refocus Christian believers so that they can have a significant impact in the broader community. Where these have, in different ways, turned away from the world in order to become more holy, the emerging church movement (ECM) turns towards the world and sides with culture against the institutional church. In this article, the ECM shall be considered with the purpose of introducing discussions regarding holiness in faith practice today. This demonstrates that holiness is something that can be embraced by many people regardless of their differences to apply holiness in a relevant way in the world today.

Interreligious dialogue is a global application of authentic 'discussions', as will be pointed out in the section on 'Interreligious dialogue'.

The ECM has been advancing as a movement since around the time of the new millennium. It is a post-evangelical movement in a post-Christendom society. The ECM has been referred to as a 'conversation' as opposed to a type of spirituality. *A New Kind of Christian* (McLaren 2001), *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Chalke & Mann 2003), *A Generous Orthodoxy* (McLaren 2004) and *Finding Our Way Again* (McLaren 2008) are some of the key works that are associated with this conversation and this movement. To understand the ECM and the contribution it can make to living out holiness effectively in today's world, a brief overview of its background and development is provided here.

The ECM started in response to dramatic sociological changes in society and some challenges that the church has had in terms of its relevance to society. In order to effectively foster a faith community in a postmodern word, something 'new' is required – a new approach towards the church, the theological framework, spirituality and the Christian lifestyle as a whole (McLaren 2008:18). A new approach was necessary also because, since the 1960s, a distinction has increasingly

been made between being spiritual and being religious.[1] It was now entirely possible to be spiritual without necessarily being religious (see Tickle 2012:77). New ideas often compromised traditional moral standards and the authority and relevance of the institutionalised church have been questioned both on a personal and a societal level.

The ECM does not propagate an extreme deconstruction of the Christian faith but rather aims to adapt what Christianity is about in order to reach people in this postmodern era. The ECM aims to engage effectively with the postmodern world. By becoming more like the culture it hopes to have an impact on culture. It consists largely of people from the evangelical tradition who are disillusioned with the institutionalised church (in its rigid or dogmatic guise) and who seek a fresh expression for their faith. This movement embraces 'diversity and inclusivity', although the majority of the followers of the ECM are from mainline denominations (see Burge & Djupe 2014:649). Many of the persons who choose to be affiliated with this movement are more 'liberal', both on a spiritual and a political level. This makes them more likely to interact effectively with people outside of mainline denominations. In such an atmosphere, people from all walks of life should be able to come to faith and experience a sense of belonging. The ECM acknowledges the contribution of the institutional church but aims to re-imagine, re-invent, redefine and reconstruct Christianity to 'promote a healthful, whole, hearty spirituality' (McLaren 2008:18). The ECM strives for an authentic and substantial change in the spiritual life of Christians.

In the postmodern context, the ECM's emphasis on Jesus' relational approach to all people makes this a radically inclusive approach. The aim is to 're-invent' the church similar to how the Nazarene Church aimed at reinventing the idea of holiness. For the ECM, a Christian life includes aspects such as holiness and should be lived out in an authentic way. It should build bridges and reach out to those outside the walls of the local churches. The recent ECM went beyond the evangelical tradition to include other denominations and those outside of the institutionalised church in conversation. This approach is suitable in a world that is shifting to 'postmodernity', a world where authentic relationships are of cardinal importance and a world where there is respect for diversity.

A respect for diversity is related to a consideration of holiness from a variety of different perspectives as it may contribute to greater unity based on authentic and effective practices that are at home in this postmodern world with its increasingly globalised perspective. Interreligious dialogue adopts a conversational approach and takes the conversation

to other religions. By way of an approach, 'comparative theology' compares differences and searches for common ground with the aim to contribute towards solving global issues. The various spiritualties and conversations collectively contribute towards making the idea of holiness more attainable and relevant in faith practice. In this regard, comparative theology and interreligious dialogue form two sides of the same coin: The academic and the theoretical side on the one hand and the practical and the spiritual side on the other hand. Comparative theology as a field of study requires engaging with a broad range of theological issues, including the commitments of faith communities, their scriptures, traditions, practices, values and beliefs (see Clooney 2010:10, 2013:52). Interreligious dialogue involves interacting with people who are living out their faith in an authentic way and are applying their traditions to practical life with wisdom (see Clooney 2010:10, 2013:53). Comparative studies aim towards an in-depth understanding of the other, which can make living together successfully in practice a reality. Comparative theology is an important hermeneutical tool in this article to consider the notion of holiness in relation to interreligious dialogue.

Interreligious dialogue

The idea and practice of interreligious dialogue goes even further in crossing the bridge to people of other faiths. In interfaith discussions, human needs and crises are considered on a global scale and solutions are sought through an incorporation of various religious perspectives. In a field such as comparative theology, different beliefs from various religious persuasions are considered in order to find a common ground. The 'Parliament of the World's Religions'[2] is a well-known example of interfaith discussions in this regard. Since then, annual meetings have been held to discuss how religious belief can influence the contemporary world in a positive way. Some prominent recent proponents of this dialogue directly and indirectly are Hans Küng and Pope John Francis.

While the ECM emphasises reconciliation between different denominations through conversation, 'interreligious dialogue' takes it further. The primary concern of the ECM is the authentic expression of the *Christian faith*. Interreligious dialogue aims to reconcile *different religions* and beliefs through dialogue in an increasingly 'unified and globalised' world (Meister 2011:5). This reconciliation is about a creative tension in which similarities and differences can co-exist without one having more importance than the other. It is not a once-for-all accomplishment but an ongoing creative process. The philosophy of interreligious dialogue is that all religions have their origin in the same God who created the universe and sustains life. The main aim is to create harmony among the different religions. A dialogue between different

---

1. A short remark on the difference between 'spiritual' and 'religious' is necessary here. Spirituality does not necessarily have to be linked to belief in a transcendent being (God), where religion could be (cf. Kourie 2015, p. 2 of 9). 'At its most basic, religion is the fundamental life stance of the person who believes in transcendent reality' (Schneiders 2003:168). Spirituality can refer to the reason for one's existence and the values and meaning ascribed to it; it can also denote self-transcendence towards an ultimate value one perceives (Schneiders 2003:165). There are different relationships between religion and spirituality and these range from a total separation between religion and spirituality to an overlap, with one implicating the other (Schneiders 2003:164).

2. During this event, 45 religions, denominations and organisations came together in Chicago (Swidler 2013:6). Participants included institutions such as the Evangelical Alliance and the Free Religious Association, as well as Jewish women's groups and African-American Catholics (see Seager 1994:4). The conference not only brought the different religions together but also minority and fringe groups. Many Protestant groups also attended. The main topic was comparative religion (see Seager 1994:477).

religious groups or individuals 'often involves a delicate and often difficult balance between commitment to one's own tradition and openness to another' (Cornille 2013:xiii). This is a creative tension or dialectic relationship.

About a decade after the Parliament of the World's Religions, the Christian Ecumenical Faith Movement initiated something similar for Christian churches and denominations (see Seager 1994:xv–xvi; Swidler 2013:4). The method they used was also conversational and the aim was also to set aside differences and find common ground as a basis for unity among Christians. Through the Ecumenical Faith Movement, its promotion of goodwill and building bridges across doctrinal differences, Christian believers have been enabled to adopt a more inclusive approach towards people who adhere to other religions.

Comparative theology studies 'specific features' of religions in order to find a common ground and promote unity among them (see Cheetham, Pratt & Thomas 2013:143–146; cf. Roberts 2016:2). A similar approach to the idea of holiness in faith practice can enhance the field by incorporating a variety of views not only from various Christian spiritualities but also from other religions. Although holiness has been described differently in various traditions, a cooperative approach can lead to an enriched view of holiness in faith practice today. In showing 'sensitivity to particularities' in the different religions, it is possible to gain an in-depth understanding of one's own faith, which can lead to a broader impact on the world, both locally and globally (see Roberts 2016:2). Dialogue can contribute to create greater unity and prevent social evils.

In *Global Ethic: A Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*, Kung and Kuschel (2006:9) argue for a 'global ethic' that applies what is common to all religions in the world to practice. A global ethic does not mean that religions should put their own beliefs and ethics aside in order to participate but rather that they all contribute to interreligious tolerance and cooperation. When interreligious dialogue is promoted in a carefully thought-out and intentional way, it can prove to be beneficial to the world at large. This dialogue finds common ground in various spiritualities that collectively seek authentic relationships between God and people (Smock 2002:xiii). Interreligious dialogue has the potential to 'enhance mutual awareness, foster joint activities and even transform relationships between members of warring groups' (Smock 2002:ix).

Interreligious dialogue has adopted an approach that aims at the understanding of difference, facilitating teamwork to make the world a better place and fostering tolerance through sharing of emotions (see Swidler, Duran & Firestone 2007:2). Understanding one another and seeking the betterment of the world require a 'hermeneutical effort' (Cornille 2013: xiii). Accepting differences and embracing diversity are challenging, especially if personal and religious identities intersect. In order for complex global issues to be solved, the religions from around the world have a contribution to make.

Issues such as violence against women and children, poverty, terrorism, crime and the destruction of the earth and its natural resources affect a multitude of lives. Creation cannot be abused or taken for granted but should be managed responsibly. Creation consists of 'all beings, all things, the ones we see and the ones we do not' (Fox 1991:7). This means that all people need to take care of not only humanity but also nature. This perspective on life suggests that all of creation is interdependent. Personal well-being and the welfare of others are intricately related. This requires a 'respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals and plants and for the preservation of the earth, the air, water and soul' (Kung & Kuschel 2006:14).

Interreligious dialogue emphasises a value-centred life. The values of 'mutual respect, understanding and cooperation' are paramount for the success of the movement (Kung & Kuschel 2006:9). Rather than seeking to win arguments, humility and 'hospitality to the truth of another' are required (Cornille 2013:xiii). Persons who represent a specific religion at the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) are like religious diplomats who represent the others adhering to their religion. The aim is to bring peace and unity. This involves a 'concilliary and constructive attitude' (Cornille 2013:xii).

Authentic dialogue, community and spirituality

For a dialogue to be successful, 'incommensurability' is to be avoided and common ground needs to be established and developed (Muck 2011:213). Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (see Jn 4) is an example of successful communication. Instead of stating his point and giving his own perspective immediately, Jesus first listens to her, establishes common ground and genuinely considers what she says (see Muck 2011:213). Interreligious dialogue also involves discernment given by the Spirit (see Muck 2011:213). Being led by the Holy Spirit contributes to personal growth. It can open people's eyes to viewpoints other than their own that would perhaps never have been considered.

Authentic dialogue may become possible where values and attitudes, such as humility, respect, tolerance, willingness to understand and love, are present. Each discussion might entail a variety of values. Although a wealth of knowledge can be gained from meaningful dialogues with people from other religious groups, it takes time. To learn about another religion entails both patience and a learning attitude. It involves seeing the bigger picture, namely, the recognition that there is not a hierarchy of religions, just a difference, and the acknowledgement that all people share this one planet and are part of humanity as a whole. Authenticity in interfaith dialogue requires acknowledging one's own limitations. Although this makes one vulnerable, it also opens opportunities to draw closer to one another in a bid to alleviate the problems of the world (Madigan 2013:259). The more inroads are made into developing an authentic interreligious dialogue, the greater the peace in this world can be.

In this world, which is becoming 'increasingly interconnected and interdependent', the struggle for natural resources is escalating (Volf 2011:1). Conflicts occur over natural resources, such as oil, or over what a group regards as spiritual or holy (Volf 2011:3–4). All of this challenges unity. Caring about the common good of people and the sanctity of life therefore becomes the by-product of effective interreligious dialogue.

An example of an attempt at interreligious dialogue may be found in the work of Pope Francis, who is known for his inclusive approach towards religion. From his religious perspective, the pope has attempted to accentuate and acknowledge divisive factors of the Christian faith that might make it difficult to connect in an interreligious way. For him, his specific religious background in the form of the gospel makes it possible to have an interreligious dialogue, because of the core message of the gospel, of inclusive love and human dignity. However, this is not without its challenges, and different departure points will exist within this dialogue. In this regard, Pope Francis' religious background is not a condition for unity and dialogue (i.e. the Christian faith is not a condition), but it makes it possible, that is, the content of the Christian gospel can be universal. It is about religious perspectives that undergird the conviction of the dignity of all people of humanity, which can contribute to interreligious dialogue.

There are many challenges and criticisms regarding interreligious dialogue. This is largely because of the complexity of the issues involved. In principle, the values of this dialogue are good, but in practice they are difficult to apply. One challenge is when a minority group is not given enough space by the majority group for 'fear of syncretism' (Grung 2011:27). This results in inequality and a lack of cooperation and respect, which are values to which the organisation subscribes. These are the values that should contribute towards creating an authentic holistic community, but if they are not lived out in practice, the goal is not reached. Prevalent issues such as 'freedom of speech and equal rights' for sexual minorities, for instance, are regarded by some as 'irrelevant Western values' (Grung 2011:27). Feminist perspectives are also not fairly considered in the interreligious dialogue discussions (see Grung 2011:28–29). There is the 'risk of reproducing dichotomies' between the majority and the minority, and between religious men and religious women (Grung 2011:32). These are the barriers to overcome if the dialogue has to be effective. Values of humility, respect and cooperation are important for building bridges across these divides, and thereby avoiding a power struggle.

The exclusivist claims of Christian orthodoxy, such as seeing Jesus as 'the only way' to God, are an impediment to building bridges between the different religions. Therefore, Christian believers often struggle to reach out to other religions (see Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12). The idea that a person was either reconciled with God through Jesus or is 'without Jesus', and therefore in a state of hostility with God, amounts to what Fox and Townsend (2011:4) call 'the unhelpful and often toxic baggage

of religiosity'. Because of these problems, core issues such as salvation and the cross, the church, eschatology, heaven and hell, and the Holy Spirit are often put on the 'back-burner' in conversations with other religions. A conservative reaction to this is voiced by Pollitt (1996:7, 16), for example, who sees the shying away from core Christian values as 'an expression of the spirit of the Antichrist' that is controlled by 'the activity of Satan'. According to the orthodox view, the Holy Spirit only lives in and enlivens Christian believers and makes people holy through their acceptance of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Interreligious dialogue and equivalent movements are therefore deemed futile because only 'genuine Christians who have the Spirit' in them can lead a true spiritual life of holiness. There is also the criticism that conversation with others, such as through interreligious dialogue, compromises the 'power and potency' of the Scripture (DeRuvo & Richards 2012:6). In the discussion about a closer relationship between Christianity and Islam, some worry that it would be Christianity that is asked to change its identity and take on the form of a cult that is less than Christianity (DeRuvo & Richards 2012:8). Any attempt to merge Christianity with another religion is, from this perspective, not only anti-biblical but also goes against what Jesus said and stood for (DeRuvo & Richards 2012:8).

Despite these criticisms and the challenges that are faced by the attempt at interreligious dialogue, this conversation has a contribution to make towards living out holiness in faith practice in today's world. The contribution is similar to that of the emerging church, although the scope is more global. The emerging church acknowledges the postmodern paradigm and also accepts that living in a post-Christian society requires an adaptation regarding how Christianity is conveyed. A similarity between the ECM and interreligious dialogue is that both bring people from different faiths and traditions together in order for them to contribute together to what is socially beneficial and for the betterment of society. This is *faith practice*. Such a holistic effort for social justice and mercy towards the oppressed leads to reconciliation and wholeness for all. This is holy living in the practical everyday life of today. It can make a difference in this world. Together, humanity can contribute to integration, reconciliation and the development of society.

With the many global issues and concerns, global solutions should be found through social action (see Knitter 2013:141) that decreases human suffering (Knitter 2013:141). Although religions differ in beliefs, they can unite in improving the condition of the world. Most people in the global world are religious. Most religions focus on transformation and the betterment of society. Successful dialogue can make a significant contribution to help suffering people find hope and wholeness. Therefore, holiness in faith practice from an interreligious perspective means taking a dynamic approach towards complex and particular problems, rather than offering general guidance regarding localised issues. Authentic holiness in faith practice can contribute towards the greater good. Rather than deny brokenness, interreligious dialogue aims to bring healing. Holiness in faith practice can

therefore be lived out more inclusively through seeking solutions to global problems and taking steps towards restoring humanity to a higher level of dignity. This can be done through utilising aspects of different religions that can contribute towards a more whole, integrated society. This approach towards wholeness contributes towards a more holy world, where holiness is holistic and the creator works through people to restore the creation.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to illustrate that holiness is not one-dimensional but that it takes on many different forms as it evolves over time and is tailored to different eras. In this contribution, 'holiness' as it emerges in the ECM (and the Christian faith) is applied to the practice (and ideal) of interreligious dialogue. The idea of holiness has evolved from 'being set apart for God and from corruption in the world' to being authentic in community with others, also with those from different denominations and religions.

In the secularised and technological world of today with its many political and human rights issues (e.g. debates on racism, slavery, sexuality, gender, borders and migration), many people are sceptical of the relevance of religion and spirituality. Holiness as a practice of faith (irrespective of which faith or religion) connects different religions because it focusses on human conduct and ethics which is the result of an inner transformation. The practice of interreligious dialogue could contribute to the alleviation of poverty, and eradication of human trafficking and xenophobia as their way of practising holiness. Holiness in faith practice is about receiving the power of the Holy Spirit in order to oppose corrupt practices in the church and the community.

In contemporary theologies that focus on the notion of holiness, some researchers, like Miroslav Volf (2011), bring the Scripture and the real-life issues of society into dialogue in a hermeneutical endeavour of understanding. This hermeneutics is applied in the interreligious dialogue. The dynamic movement which is constituted by interreligious dialogue brings different religions and their spiritual insights into dialogue by means of a comparative theology. Commonalities in religions and their scriptures are sought. Holiness lies indirectly in unity, peace and understanding among people. Holiness of life can bring people to put others before themselves, to engage in global issues and to try and make the world a better place. These goals transcend personal inadequacies. Collectively, people seek solutions for the problems of the world. The quality of holiness links to values such as courage and justice. Courage is needed to live bravely in a world where there is much anxiety, fear and horror. Justice is needed in order to uphold the rights and dignity of women, people who are poverty stricken and other vulnerable and oppressed people who find themselves on the margins of society.

Holiness in faith practice is pragmatic and not dogmatic. It is therefore dynamic and contextualised, not austere and inflexible. It enhances relational connections, contributes to expressing spirituality in a variety of ways and could contribute to building a common ground wherein religious differences exist. Holiness in faith practice can be expressed today in dynamic ways, thereby enhancing faith and humanity through loving relationships. Holiness as devoted service to God and God's creation could contribute towards a positive holistic change.

Acknowledgements

References

Ackermann, D., 2014, *Surprised by the man on the borrowed donkey*, Lux Verbi, Cape Town.

Burge, R.P. & Djupe, P.A., 2014, 'Truly inclusive or uniformly liberal? An analysis of the politics of the Emerging Church', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53(3), 636–651. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12129

Chalke, S. & Mann, A., 2003, *The lost message of Jesus*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Cheetham, D., Pratt, D. & Thomas, D., 2013, *Understanding interreligious relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Clooney, F.X., 2010, *Comparative theology: Deep learning across religious borders*, Wiley Blackwell, Malden, MA.

Clooney, F.X., 2013, 'Religious diversity and comparative theology', in C. Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious dialogue*, pp. 51–63, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA.

Comfort, P.W. & Elwell, W.A., 2001, *Tyndale Bible dictionary*, Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, IL.

Cornille, C. (ed.), 2013, *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious dialogue*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

DeRuvo, F. & Richards, H., 2012, *Chrislam*, Study-Grow-Know, Scotts Valley, CA.

Fox, M., 1991, *Creation spirituality: Liberating gifts for the peoples of the earth*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York.

Fox, M. & Townsend, M., 2011, *Jesus through pagan eyes: Bridging neopagan perspectives with a progressive vision of Christ*, Llewellyn Publications, Woodburn, MN.

Grung, A.H., 2011, 'Interreligious dialogue: Moving between compartmentalisation and complexity', *Approaching Religion* 1(1), 25–32. https://doi.org/10.30664/ar.67467

Hersey, K., 2015, 'Choosing the right words', in J. Broward & T.J. Oord (eds.), *Renovating holiness*, pp. 29–32, SacraSage Press, Nampa, ID.

Knitter, P.F., 2013, 'Inter-religious dialogue and social action', in C. Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious dialogue*, pp. 133–148, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

Kourie, C., 2015, 'Weaving colourful threads: A tapestry of spirituality and mysticism', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71(1), Art. #3023, p. 9. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i1.3023

Kung, H. & Kuschel, K., 2006, *Global ethic: The declaration of the parliament of the world's religions*, The Continuum International Publishing Group, New York.

Levterov, T., 2013, 'Theological contributions of John Wesley to the doctrine of Christian perfection', *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 51(2), 301–310.

Madigan, D., 2013, 'Christian-Muslim dialogue', in C. Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious* dialogue, pp. 244–260, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

McLaren, B., 2001, *A new kind of Christian*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

McLaren, B., 2004, *A generous orthodoxy*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

McLaren, B., 2008, *Finding our way again: The return of the ancient practices*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN.

Meister, C. (ed.), 2011, *The Oxford handbook of religious diversity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Muck, T.C., 2011, 'Christian spirituality in interfaith encounter', in G.G. Scorgie (ed.), *Dictionary of Christian spirituality*, pp. 211–215, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

Outler, A.C. (ed.), 1964, *John Wesley: The library of protestant thought*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Pollitt, H.J., 1996, *The inter-faith movement: The New Age enters the* church, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, PA.

Roberts, M.V., 2016, *Comparing faithfully: Insights for systematic theological reflection*, Fordham University Press, New York.

Schneiders, S., 2003, 'Religion vs. spirituality: A contemporary conundrum', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 3(2), 163–185. https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2003.0040

Seager, R.H. (ed.), 1994, *Dawn of religious pluralism: Voices from the World Parliament of Religions, 1893*, Open Court Publishing Company, Peru, IL.

Shelley, B.L., 2013, *Church history: In plain language*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN.

Smock, D.R. (ed.), 2002, *Inter-faith dialogue and peace building*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC.

Sproul, R.C., 1998, *The holiness of* God, Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, IL.

Swidler, L., Duran, K. & Firestone, R., 2007, *Trialogue: Jews, Christians and Muslims in dialogue*, Twenty-third Publications, New London, CT.

Swidler, L., 2013, 'The history of interreligious dialogue' in C. Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to inter-religious dialogue*, pp. 3–19, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

Thorsen, D., 2008, 'Holiness in postmodern culture', *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43(2), 123–135.

Tickle, P., 2012, *Emergence Christianity: What it is, where it is going and why it matters*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

Volf, M., 2011, *Allah: A Christian response*, HarperOne, New York.