

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the study by recapitulating its underlying motivation, methodological approach, central research question, and key findings, while also advancing a preliminary implication: a reconsideration of the notion of conversion in light of the Spirit's presence in other religious communities.

5.1. Summary

Rooted in Indonesia's pluralistic context, which calls for a theologically grounded approach to Christian mission and peaceful living with other faith communities, this study examines the Spirit's activity among them by refining Abraham Kuyper's perspective with Michael Welker's pneumatology. The central question—"In what ways does Michael Welker's pneumatology refine Abraham Kuyper's view of the Spirit's work among other faith communities?"—is explored across three chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines Kuyper's programmatic affirmations of the Spirit's work among other faith communities through cosmic pneumatology, an interdisciplinary view of religion, and the doctrine of common grace. Religion is seen as a lived, communal response to spiritual powers; the Spirit bestows common grace that enables religious vitality despite sin and evil; Christians are called to discern the Spirit's presence without demonizing or idealizing other faiths; such discernment requires interdisciplinary engagement; common grace points toward particular grace with humility; and the Spirit often works indirectly through Christian witness. However, Kuyper's framework compartmentalizes the Spirit's cosmic and redemptive works and fails to provide adequate criteria for discernment—gaps addressed in Welker's pneumatology.

Chapter 3 explores Welker's understanding of religion through the lens of the multimodal human spirit, then examines his pneumatology as a framework for discerning the Spirit's activity among other faith communities. Central to this is Welker's affirmation of the continuity between the Spirit of creation and the Spirit of new creation, and his depiction of the Spirit as a multimodal power initiating emergent processes that concretely liberate human beings amid the forces of sin and evil or deceitful spirits. These acts of liberation are discernible through the pneumatic peacebuilding ethos evident in faith communities. Most clearly, the Spirit may be discerned as the Spirit of Jesus Christ when individuals or communities convert to Christ and join the church, or when churches engage other faith communities through proclamation of Jesus Christ, diaconal service, and prophetic witness. The chapter concludes by developing a concept of the Spirit's work in judgment, largely absent in Welker's pneumatology, and by highlighting his Western secular bias.

In the Kuyperian spirit of theological *aggiornamento*, Chapter 4 refines Kuyper's programmatic vision through the lens of Welker's pneumatology. The analysis highlights five core affirmations in Kuyper that align with Welker's pneumatology and shows how Welker addresses two key limitations in Kuyper's framework: the separation between the Spirit's creative and redemptive work and the deficiency of discernment. It then summarizes the refinement in ten key theses that clarify religion's embodied and embedded character, articulate a nuanced framework for discerning the Spirit's activity among other faith communities based on biblical traditions, and differentiate the indispensable role of the church community in this discernment. The chapter concludes by evaluating these theses in dialogue with neo-Calvinist and Pentecostal pneumatologies of religion. While contributing to the development of a Kuyperian pneumatology of religions, the findings remain

provisional and call for further refinement through empirical, interdisciplinary, and ecumenical engagement.

5.2. A preliminary implication: a rethinking of conversion

Recognizing the Spirit's presence in other faith communities suggests a rethinking of the idea of conversion.

Conversion to Christianity should be reimagined not merely as a binary transition from 'before' to 'after,' but as a complex, Spirit-led journey. It is the one and the same Spirit who guides individuals toward the knowledge of Jesus Christ and brings them across the threshold into the kingdom of God. While maintaining the traditional theological distinction between the church and the world, or between the dominion of darkness and the kingdom of the Son, conversion must *also* be understood as a Spirit-empowered journey. Jesus' words in Mark 12:34—"You are not far from the kingdom of God"—highlight the possibility of spiritual proximity without full inclusion. Mark's use of "not far" is a positive statement, inviting further reflection and openness to deeper transformation.¹ The categories of "far" and "not far" (i.e., "near") differ from the conventional Protestant dichotomy of "belonging" (converted) versus "not belonging" (unconverted). The categories of journey and belonging are not oppositional but complementary, as the same Spirit is at work in both. Christians should therefore regard moments in which unbelievers "draw near" to Jesus (cf. Luke 15:1) as significant signs of the Spirit's work that may lead to

¹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 577; Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew-Mark*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, Rev. ed, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 908.

conversion. Likewise, believers may later discern with gratitude the Spirit's formative presence in their conversion journey toward Jesus Christ.²

Acknowledging the Spirit's multimodal activity calls us to appreciate the complexity of the conversion journey, which encompasses personal transformation across multiple spheres of life and may unfold along a circuitous and gradual path.³ For instance, in contemporary Egypt, political dynamics significantly shape conversion: the state imposes bureaucratic and civic barriers for those converting from Islam to Christianity while easing the path for conversions to Islam.⁴ Thus, coming to Jesus almost always involves changes not only on a spiritual level but also within the political, social, economic, familial, and even geographical contexts in which individuals are uniquely situated. This understanding challenges Christians to avoid imposing a singular narrative of conversion and instead approach each non-Christian's spiritual journey, shaped by their unique circumstances, with empathy, openness, and spiritual discernment.

This multidimensional understanding of conversion also prompts a re-examination of the conventional divide between evangelism and social action in the church's mission.⁵ If the Spirit operates beyond the boundaries of the church in

² Cf. "Preparatory grace" in Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology. Volume 3*, 309–33.

³ Cf. Michal Kravel-Tovi, "Making a Difference: The Political Life of Religious Conversion," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 52, no. 1 (October 23, 2023): 26, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-052721-101416>. "Converts do not come from nowhere. Their particular socioeconomic positions and dispositions often shape the paths available to them and determine the social spaces of privilege and belonging allocated to them at the end of the journey to conversion. From their distinct positions, they take, and sometimes carve, specific spiritual passages; as they adopt new religious truths and affiliations they remorph their relations with families, compatriots, civil society organizations, employers, interest groups, and national cultures and thus engender, reshape, and erase textures of social difference."

⁴ Kravel-Tovi, 25.

⁵ Despite their efforts to maintain their unity, the dichotomy is evident, as seen in Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2011).

diverse and multifaceted ways, then the church is called to discern where the Holy Spirit is at work in various spheres of life and “join in.”⁶ This does not imply that every local church must excel in all areas of life, as each is uniquely gifted with different charisms of the Spirit. The task, therefore, is for each congregation to faithfully embody its particular calling to bear witness to Christ among religious others across all domains of life. This witness is expressed through a threefold *Gestalt*—namely, the proclamation of Jesus, diaconal service, and prophetic engagement—in collaboration with other churches.⁷

⁶ Kim, “Discerning the Spirit,” 3.

⁷ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 376–80. Tim Keller’s *Center Church* offers a compelling example of a multicontextual, varied, and cooperative approach to mission. He envisions a Spirit-led “gospel ecosystem” in which networks of diverse churches engage not only in gospel-centered teaching and worship, but also in ministry to a wide range of cultural groups and social segments throughout the city.