

## **THE CHALLENGE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND PRAXIS TO THE AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL COMMUNITY**

By  
Emmanuel Martey\*

### ***Introduction***

Today, we all live in a multicultural society. As a result of globalization and migration, our contemporary world has become pluralistic, and monocultures are giving way to multicultures. And with the multicultural also comes the multireligious—a new situation that compels the Christian Church in Africa and its theology to rethink and relate to this rapidly growing phenomenon.

All around us, people of various religio-cultural persuasions are coming closer to each other on a global scale and this interaction already serves as an unproclaimed dialogue—an ongoing dialogue of an informal nature.

In such situations, distances are now being narrowed and, in certain areas, compromises are replacing confrontations. In educational institutions for example, halls of residence, lecture rooms, libraries, canteens, buses, offices, faculty common rooms, and playgrounds are all meeting places for adherents of various religious traditions. What then should be our theological orientation and ecumenical praxis towards this plurality of religious faiths; and, how do we interpret all the non-Christian experiences which our increasingly pluralistic culture provides?

### ***Inter-Religious Dialogue As Ecumenical Mandate***

Contemporary understanding of “ecumenism” obliges the Church to enter into dialogue with people of other faith traditions. If the Church’s ecumenical mandate or vision is not only to bring unity and renewal of the whole Christian community, but also to embark on a worldwide mission and seek the unity of the whole human race, that is, the whole inhabited earth, then theology and theological education “ought to be taught and done in relation to the people of other faiths, and [have] to take inter-religious dialogue seriously.”<sup>1</sup>

Dialogue then becomes an essential and constitutive part of the Church’s mission and therefore very important for Christian theology. Today, “theology of dialogue” has become one of the most significant missiological currents and has found a firm place of acceptance in both the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Such a theological understanding has led the ecumenical bodies to initiate a number of contacts with African traditionalists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, and to convene bilateral and multilateral conferences.<sup>2</sup>

---

\* Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey is Professor of Theology at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon in Ghana. He is also the Secretary of the Conference of African Theological Institutions (CATI).

The term “dialogue” is derived from the Greek *dia-logos* which literally means “through word.” Dialogue is therefore “talking together” or “conversation.” Inter-religious dialogue is primarily a conversation between believers of different faiths or religious traditions.

Fundamentally, inter-religious dialogue has come to be understood as an encounter between people who live by different faith traditions in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance. According to S. Wesley Ariarajah, inter-faith dialogue is seen as

a way not only to become informed about the faiths of others but also to rediscover essential dimensions of one’s own faith tradition. The benefits of removing historical prejudices and enmities as well as new possibilities for working together for common good [are] recognized and affirmed.<sup>3</sup>

In point of fact, the Christian faith’s attempt to understand its relationship with other religious traditions began in the early Church when the new faith had to grapple with diverse religio-cultural environments including Jewish and Graeco-Roman worldviews. Again, history is replete with evidence that from the patristic period through the medieval to the modern era, there had been divergent schools of thought on how to understand and relate to religious life-style that was not based on Christian convictions.

It was not until the rise of modern ecumenical movement—whose beginning is usually traced to the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 which focused on the evangelization of the whole human race—that inter-religious dialogue was seen as constitutive part of the Church’s *oikoumenic* mandate. Inter-faith dialogue—its concept and practice—therefore became a serious ecumenical agenda.

It is not surprising, then, that both the Edinburgh (1910) and Jerusalem (1928) Missionary Conferences should give prominence to inter-religious relations. For example, while Edinburgh compared the Christian encounter with “religious traditions of Asia . . . as being of the same order as the meeting of the New Testament Church with Graeco-Roman culture” thus “demanding fundamental shifts in Christian self-understanding and theology”; Jerusalem (1928), although asserted the capabilities of the Christian Gospel to provide answers to problems of our troubled world, nevertheless affirmed the *values* in “other religions and called on Christians to join hands with all believers to confront the growing impact of secular culture.”<sup>4</sup>

It was this same *oikoumenic* visionary mandate of the Church that led the ecumenical movement to affirm at the Kandy (Sri Lankan) Conference of 1967 that dialogue was “the most appropriate approach in inter-faith relations.”<sup>5</sup> The establishment of the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies by the World Council of Churches’ Central Committee in 1971 in Addis Ababa, and also, the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians tremendously increased the visibility of inter-faith dialogue in the life of the Churches. In 1970, under the auspices of WCC, the first multi-

faith dialogue was convened in Lebanon bringing Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist participants together.

### *Inter-Religious Dialogue as Ecumenical Praxis*

Inter-religious dialogue is not only an ecumenical mandate; it is also an ecumenical praxis. If we trace the meaning of ecumenism to its Greek root *oikos* which means “household” or “home”; we realize that *oikos* supplies the root meaning of three important words that collectively determine the question of survival of the globe. First, it provides the root meaning for *oikoumene* which questions whether the people of the earth are able to inhabit the earth in peace. Second, it furnishes the root meaning for *economy* which questions whether everyone in the global household has access to what it takes to live a meaningfully abundant life that Jesus Christ talked about; and third, it provides the root meaning for *ecology* which questions whether nature will have a home, its own living space. The survival of our globe would be determined by these three spheres.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the questions of *oikos* are questions of life and death because to be homeless is to be condemned to death.

All the three-level understanding of *oikos* dealing with the radical questions of economy, ecology and socio-economic conditions that affect the lives of ordinary people in Africa and the rest of the Third World compels the Church to look *beyond* ecclesial unity; and, putting its faith into action engage in a theological praxis that would “expand the existing boundaries of orthodoxy [and] enter into the liberative streams of other religions and cultures.”<sup>7</sup>

In our dealing with persons of other faith traditions therefore, dialogue becomes an ecumenical praxis that enables us to involve and address the more radical questions of life and death including issues of creative justice which is God’s power of life against death.<sup>8</sup> Inter-religious dialogue then affords the Christian Church the opportunity to join other oppressed and exploited people of the world—vast majority of who perceive “their ultimate concern and symbolize their struggle for liberation in the idiom of non-Christian religions and cultures.”<sup>9</sup>

It is thus our contemporary understanding of ecumenism with its concomitant theological orientation towards the more radical questions dealing with the survival of the whole inhabited earth that lead us into theological and inter-faith praxis—that is, an informed, creative and committed action undertaken to shape and change our ailing and divided world.

Such an ecumenical theological praxis is guided by a moral disposition to act truly and justly and to show genuine concern for human well-being and for life in its fullness. In this context, praxis becomes the action of people who are free and are able to act for themselves. But such a committed action also involves risks and, therefore, requires that a person makes a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in a particular situation.<sup>10</sup>

It follows then that our *oikoumenic* vocation obligates the Church to cooperate with people of other faiths to welcome the assistance of our partners in dialogue to be able to respond to God's will and strive to contribute to the coming Kingdom of God. Inter-religious dialogue then becomes one way of working for the coming Kingdom. For Arnold Temple, inter-religious dialogue

is an attempt by the Church to act in partnership with those outside its institutional life in the promotion of the Kingdom of God, the resultant effect being the renewal of societies to manifest the value of the Kingdom—love, justice, freedom and truth. It is from these value that peace proceeds.<sup>11</sup>

The focus of our inter-religious dialogue and praxis ought to be guarded by both theological and pastoral awareness that it is the ordinary believing Christians living in everyday contact with believers of other faiths that will make the whole process successful. Therefore in our inter-religious praxis, priority must be given to *life*—life that is shared among believers in God. This is the most important dimension of the dialogical process and not just mere gathering of theologians and Church leaders sitting around tables with scholars and leaders of other religions talking and discussing high-minded topics. This “dialogue of life” takes place when people of various faiths

witness to the other concerning the values they have found in their faith, and through the daily practice of brotherhood [and sisterhood], helpfulness, open-heartedness and hospitality, each show themselves to be a God-fearing neighbour. The true Christians and [their neighbours of other faiths] offer to a busy world values arising from God's message when they revere the elderly, conscientiously rear the young, care for the sick and the poor in their midst, and work together for social justice, welfare and human rights.<sup>12</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is the need to shift focus of inter-religious relations from scholars and religious leaders to ordinary believers at the grassroots. In this paradigm shift, priority ought to be given to *life praxis* and we should therefore speak more of inter-faith praxis than dialogue. And as praxis, the process refers to actions taken in all the various aspects of human life embracing not just one but the many practices within the social realm. This should be so because a shared life among believers in God can take many different forms. In point if fact, within the African context

When people of various faiths live together—not simply co-habiting the same town but *together*—the question of dialogue or proclamation doesn't arise. When they work, study, struggle, celebrate, and mourn together and face the universal crises of injustice, illness and death as one [as in the case of the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS], they don't spend most of their time talking about doctrine. Their focus is on immediate concerns of survival, on taking care of the sick and needy, on communicating

cherished values to new generations, on resolving problems and tensions in productive rather than in destructive ways, on reconciling after conflicts, on seeking to build more just, humane, and dignified societies . .

And again in Africa,

. . . when believers are actively cooperating in such activities, at certain rare but privileged moments, they also express what is deepest in their lives and hearts, that is, their respective faiths, which are the sources of strength and inspiration that form the motive force which drives and guides all their activities.<sup>13</sup>

Inter-religious relations or dialogue is to be understood as the sharing of life at all levels among believers of different faiths. This is a praxis which brings enrichment to all partners when it is carried out in a consciously unselfish way.

### *Some Advantages of Inter-Religious Dialogue and Praxis*

In the political context, dialogue is understood as the opposite of conflict; while entry into dialogue could bring conflict and hostilities to an end, the abrupt end of dialogue resumes conflicts and even war. Among believers of God of different faiths, enmity has been created because of the prejudices and stereotypes that have been handed down from generation to generation; and even today, there is the reinforcement of such caricatures that generate religious intolerance and fundamentalism. In the name of religion, crimes are committed against humanity. Various reasons have been given why inter-religious dialogue is not only important but also necessary; and here, I examine just a few of these.

### *Pluralistic and Peaceful Co-existence*

In a multicultural and multireligious global environment, dialogue becomes necessary as a means of promoting understanding and acquaintance with our neighbours. Without dialogue, we will all end up in all kinds of situations of conflict. In a pluralistic situation, dialogue then becomes a contention to find mutual basis for peaceful co-existence.

Unless we learn how to walk together in harmony and peace, we will drift apart and destroy ourselves and others simply because we believe differently. In Africa, inter-religious engagements after conflicts and civil wars have produced encouraging results in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone. Arnold Temple, describing the West African situation writes:

There are stories of success of the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone. As a result of its engagement, the Inter-faith Council of Liberia won the All Africa Conference of Churches Desmond Tutu Peace Prize in 1997. In Sierra Leone, the Inter-religious Council continues their engagement in the process of reconstruction of a devastated community.<sup>14</sup>

It is the aim of inter-faith relations, dialogue and praxis in Africa to rid the continent of all religious disputes and conflicts so that all will be able to live in peace and harmony.

### *Clarifying Our Own Beliefs*

In dialogue, all partners as “believers” are invited to deepen their religious commitment; to respond with increasing sincerity to God’s personal call and gift of the Divine Self. For us Christians, this comes through Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. For us to engage in meaningful and serious dialogue, we must then be well-grounded in our faith and have strong belief. The same thing is expected of all dialogue partners. This calls for adequate preparation in which we have to ask ourselves questions concerning our own faith. For example, questions about the Doctrine of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation—about Jesus being *Vere Deus, Vere homo*.

In all these, there is the need to formulate our belief in such a way that the stranger or the non-Christian can understand and believe. The dialogical process therefore helps to clarify and makes us understand our beliefs more and, thus, makes us stronger: “Being involved in inter-religious dialogue,” says Mogen Amstrup, “always raises new questions about our own belief.”<sup>15</sup> In inter-religious dialogue, all the faith traditions are challenged by the encounter with others.

### *Searching For The Truth*

In inter-religious dialogue, we are not only seeking the truth in our own faith but also, in that of our neighbours. Dialogue is therefore to be viewed as “a common pilgrimage toward the truth, within which each tradition shares with the others the way it has to perceive and respond to that truth.”<sup>16</sup> “Truth,” it has been argued by Thomas Thangaraj, “is nothing we know” and it is also “a part of eschatology and we are living in the eschatology, but we don’t know all of it.”<sup>17</sup>

By emphasizing the eschatological dimension of the epistemology of truth, Thangaraj is reminding us that in eschatology there is the “already” as well as the “not yet” or the “yet-to-come.” Therefore in inter-religious dialogue, all the partners become pilgrims walking together towards truth.

### *Dialogue As Mission*

Dialogue is not antithetical to mission; on the contrary, it promotes mission. If one does not take one's belief or religion seriously, one will not be so eager to talk about it and tell other people about it. Mission is therefore part of dialogue because we share and tell others about our faith. In point of fact, in real life situation, dialogue and witnessing cannot be separated. They are all part of the life that we share together. Just as Thomas Michel has observed:

In a shared life, we are all constantly influencing one another and learning from each other, all growing and being enriched by encountering the acts and attitudes which God produces, through our respective faiths, in each.<sup>18</sup>

Dialogue as part of the Church's *oikoumenic mission* is well established in ecumenical circles. Arnold Temple, for instance, has contended that inter-religious dialogue is not an option against the Church's mission. Such thinking, according to him, is a "myth." Rather, to the contrary, "dialogue is a vital aspect of the mission of the Church . . . [and] is for the sake of mission."<sup>19</sup>

Again, following questions raised at the WCC 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly in 1975 in Nairobi, a theological consultation was held two years later in Chiang Mai, Thailand which affirmed that "dialogue is neither a betrayal of mission nor a 'secret weapon' of proselytism but a way 'in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today'."<sup>20</sup>

To a certain extent, progress has been made in inter-faith dialogue especially, between Christians and Muslims which has yielded evangelistic fruits. For instance, as a result of dialogue, a Christian Church has appeared once again in Ben Ghazi, Libya. On the other hand, a mosque has been built in Rome "for the first time in recent history."<sup>21</sup>

### *Mutual Enrichment*

Some have affirmed that in the dialogical process, there is mutual enrichment of the life of believers of God coming from different religious traditions. Each believer, it is argued, becomes spiritually richer than before the religious encounter and therefore becomes a better believer as Christian, Muslim or Traditionalist.

Furthermore, such encounters assist people to do away with stereotypes and to overcome prejudices. Thomas Michel has underscored the fact that

Dialogue provides believers with the opportunity to examine together those universal human tendencies towards exclusivity, chauvinism, and violence which can infect religious identity and behaviour.<sup>22</sup>

When enough room is created for the partner in religious dialogue, each will have confidence in the process and genuine sharing takes place. In dialogue, new rooms need be created in the residence of our mind and thinking, as well as in our actions. This encourages sharing together which also brings mutual enrichment.

### *Challenges of Theology of Religions and Dialogue—Quo Vadis Africa?*

Two movements or trajectories of thought quickly come to mind when discussing theology of religions, namely Evangelicalism and Ecumenicalism. Evangelicals have strongly opposed the theology of religions and dialogue and have denied the presence of God in other religions.<sup>23</sup> They argue that words like “dialogue” and “presence” often serve as replacements for key words of Scripture. For instance, the Frankfurt Declaration states:

We refute the idea that ‘Christian Presence’ among the adherents of the world religions and a give-and-take dialogue with them are substitutes for a proclamation of the Gospel which aims at conversion. Such dialogues simply establish good points of contact for missionary communication.<sup>24</sup>

Such an evangelical view is not also absent within the ecumenical movement itself. At the World Council of Churches Sixth Assembly in Vancouver (1983), while there was no serious disagreement on the need for inter-religious dialogue, there was much controversy over the *theology of religions*. The debate was whether other religions were the “vehicle of God’s redeeming activity” and a number of participants challenged a statement in the report that spoke of “God’s hand active in the religious life of our neighbours.”<sup>25</sup>

In Africa, one of the strong evangelical voices that still challenges our theological community and cannot just be dismissed is that of Byang Kato, who, writing three decades ago made a sharp distinction between early patristic ecumenism and modern ecumenism revealing the “pitfalls” in the latter. He wrote:

Unlike the true type of early ecumenical councils, present-day ecumenism plays down doctrinal issues. Their thesis is that doctrine divides, but service unites. The drive, therefore, comes mainly through service. To the ecumenicals, unity, almost at any cost, is the greatest thing that could happen to the Christian Church. Any group that refuses to join the bandwagon of liberal ecumenism is considered a separatist, sectarian, or uncooperative group.<sup>26</sup>

According to Kato, from the very outset, orthodox Christianity has been interested in fellowship and unity with people of other faiths “as long as doctrines are not compromised . . . Doctrinal truths cannot be sacrificed at the altar of unity.”<sup>27</sup> Kwame Bediako captured the full picture of Kato’s theological enterprise against the ecumenicals when he said:

Kato therefore concluded that there was “poisonous elements” in the “theology of ecumenism”—basically “syncretism” and “universalism”—at both the world-wide level of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and

the local level of its African manifestation in the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) . . . Kato's major concern was to show how the "poisonous elements" in the "theology of ecumenism" were progressively replacing what he saw as "the essential basic doctrines of the Church."<sup>28</sup>

Eugene Smith, himself an ecumenical, has enumerated the evangelical charges against his fellow ecumenicals:

The most frequent charges against us were theological liberalism, loss of ecumenical conviction, universalism in theology, substitution of social action for evangelism and the search of unity at the expense of Biblical truth.<sup>29</sup>

Ecumenicals, on the other hand, have not only defended themselves but also criticized the exclusive attitude of Christians towards other religions; and have argued that the challenge to the Christian faith *now* come not from other faiths, but from anti-religious or secular movements.<sup>30</sup>

The Ecumenical voice within the context of EATWOT has been very strong. According to Sergio Torres, "It is wrong for Christians to ignore the existence of other faiths that provide spiritual homes for hundreds of millions of persons" including African Traditional Religions. These religions, he contends, "challenge the institutional churches of the Christian tradition with very important questions."<sup>31</sup> And for Diego Irarrazaval the current President of EATWOT, he gets spiritual nourishment when participating "in indigenous rituals and celebrations that have syncretistic and non-Christian features."<sup>32</sup>

The argument of EATWOT is that the vast majority of Third World population is non-Christian who "perceive their ultimate concern and symbolize their struggle for liberation in the idiom of non-Christian religions and cultures." Thus speaking through the voice of the Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris, EATWOT declares that "a theology that does not speak to or speak through this non-Christian peoplehood is an esoteric luxury of a Christian minority" and emphasize the need for a theology of religions that will go beyond the existing boundaries of orthodoxy.<sup>33</sup>

EATWOT therefore advocates the disengagement of Christian theology from Western dominant moorings and relate to other religions. But in doing this EATWOT cautions and calls for the need to be aware of the negative and oppressive elements as well as the diversity in and within these religions. Furthermore, EATWOT calls for inter-faith praxis that will go beyond mere dialogue at the academic level to promote integral liberation and development. The Final Statement of EATWOT's 5<sup>th</sup> Conference in New Delhi (1981) declares further:

We favour ongoing dialogue between Christians and the members of other religions. But this dialogue cannot remain only on an intellectual level about God, salvation, human fulfillment, or other such concepts. Beyond dialogue there must be collaborative action for the integral liberation of

the oppressed . . . Our common praxis with the people of other faiths is a valid source of theology in the Third World.<sup>34</sup>

### *Revelation and Salvation*

There is less agreement among Christians on the issues of revelation and salvation and how these doctrines relate to other religions. These differences are seen not only within the corridors of the evangelical-ecumenical divide, but also, between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

While some Christian thinkers following Karl Barth insist that Biblical faith based on God's encounter with humanity is radically different from all the other religious faiths as we find in the works of the Dutch missiologist Hendrick Kraemer and the African Conservative-evangelical Byang Kato; dissenting voices coming mainly from ecumenicals also disagree that the gospel is in discontinuity with other religious traditions. For Kraemer, the divine will may only "shine" through other religions "in a broken way" but the "only true way to know the revealed will of God is by responding to the divine intervention in history in Christ."<sup>35</sup>

Providing a sharp Afro-evangelical critique, Byang Kato—referring to the traditional religious beliefs of his own Jaba people of Nigeria—writes:

With the coming of Christ, all other revelations come to an end. It is most unlikely that either Jaba or any other non-Christian peoples have received a direct revelation from God . . . There is neither redemption nor evidence of direct divine revelation to individuals in Jaba religion.

He then concludes,

There is emphatically no possibility of salvation through these religions. But . . . many theologians today are trying hard to elevate these non-Christian religions to the same status as Biblical Christianity . . . 'African theology' gives that impression.<sup>36</sup>

Veritably, statements such as these cannot just be dismissed merely as conservative jargons. Even if this Barth-Kraemer-Kato stance in its most conservative sense does not appear appealing or sophisticated enough to the modern mind, its call for doctrinal purity and "back-to-the Bible" are still starkly challenging. If contemporary theology in Africa is to have any meaningful impact on the poor in spirit, and the spiritual authority to overcome the forces of death and decay, these challenges have to be taken seriously.

EATWOT disagrees with this stance. In its New Delhi (1983) Final Statement, it contends that the Sacred Scriptures and traditions of other faiths are also "a source of revelation for us"; and this consideration of divine revelation "enables us to see that the

concept of the ‘people of God’ should be widened to include not only believers of other faiths but the whole of humanity.”<sup>37</sup>

Another difference in the Christian soteriological orientation towards other faiths is the distinction between Protestants and Catholics. While Protestant missions tend to be Christocentric, that of Roman Catholic is Ecclesiocentric. Protestants place emphasis on the need to believe in Christ by responding to the gospel message as a way of salvation. Although the Protestant attitude to other faiths is not entirely negative, it tends to be neutral at best on the question of salvation outside the response to Christ.<sup>38</sup>

For Catholics, salvation is a free gift of God offered in Christ to all who have faith in Him. But this faith is expressed by receiving baptism and becoming part of the Church. The Church is therefore the sacrament of the saving work of Christ available to all humanity. Roman Catholic theology is able to provide for the possibility of salvation for those outside the Church. For instance, those who lived before Christ, and those who for no fault of theirs never heard the gospel, Catholic theology has developed a concept of “implicit faith” or “faith by intention” so that no one is excluded in the Church. Thus

Salvation offered in Christ is mysteriously available to all who seek to fulfill the will of God; it is possible to be incorporated into the sacrament of the paschal mystery, the Church, by intention.<sup>39</sup>

All these different positions doubtlessly, challenge the African theological community, whose constituency consists not just of Catholics and Protestants, but also, of evangelicals and ecumenicals.

### ***Conclusion***

Africa today is a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. As such, our very survival depends on how we learn to live and walk together in harmony with our non-Christian neighbours or, drift apart and destroy ourselves and others. In inter-religious dialogue and praxis, we learn how to live and walk together with our neighbours—how to struggle together; face the crises of poverty, oppression, injustice, racism, and sexism together; face diseases, death, and mourn together; and how to celebrate life together. In all this togetherness, we also articulate and convey that which is deepest in our lives and our hearts—that which has been the source of our inspiration, empowerment and resilience in the face of death and decay—namely, our faith which has guided all our actions.

---

## **END NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> . Emmanuel Martey, “Theological Education as Catalyst for Ecumenical Formation in Africa: The Role of Associations of Theological Institutions—The Case of WAATI,” *Ministerial Formation*, 98/99, July/October, 2002, page 17 cf. page 18.

<sup>2</sup> . J. A. Jongeneel, and J. M. van Engelen, “Contemporary Currents in Missiology” in *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction—Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity* edited by F. J. Verstraelen et. al., (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995) pages 453f.

<sup>3</sup> . S. Wesley Ariarajah, “Interfaith Dialogue” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, edited by Nicholas Lossky et. a.. (Geneva, WCC Publications 2002) page 314. The expressions “inter-religious dialogue” and “inter-faith dialogue” are used here interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> . Ibid. p. 312. It must be pointed out, however, that there were some participants at the Jerusalem meeting who disagreed with the positive affirmation of other faiths and maintained the uniqueness of Christianity. Therefore the Christian attitude towards other religious faiths became highly controversial shortly after the Jerusalem Conference in 1928.

<sup>5</sup> . Ibid. p. 314.

<sup>6</sup> . See Douglas Meeks, “Globalization and Oikoumene in Theological Education” in Russelle E. Richey (ed.) *Ecumenism in Interreligious Perspectives: Globalization in Theological Education* (Nashville, Quarterly Review Books, 1992) pages 5-6

<sup>7</sup> . Aloysius Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology” in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, edited by Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1983) page 114.

<sup>8</sup> . Emmanuel Martey “Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement—A Reflection” in WCC, *Reflections on Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Geneva, WCC, 2004) pages 62f.

<sup>9</sup> . Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” page 113.

<sup>10</sup> . Mark K. Smith, “Praxis: An introduction to the Idea Plus an Annotated Book List” on website at [www.infed.org/b-praxis.htm](http://www.infed.org/b-praxis.htm), accessed 24/1/2005, p. 3. Cf. W. Carr and S. Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (Lewes, Farmer, 1986) page 190.

<sup>11</sup> . Arnold Temple, “Inter-Faith Praxis in the African Context,” *Voices From the Third World*, vol. XXV, Nos. 1&2, December 2002, page 51.

<sup>12</sup> . Thomas Michel, “Towards a Pedagogy of Religious Encounter” on website [www.puffin.creighton.edu/Jesuits/dialoguedocument/articles/michel\\_religious\\_ecounter](http://www.puffin.creighton.edu/Jesuits/dialoguedocument/articles/michel_religious_ecounter) accessed 23/1/2005, p. 1 citing Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference, “The Second Bishops’ Institute for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA II), 1979” in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, vol. 1 edited by G. Rosales C. Arevalo (Manila, Claretian, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> . Ibid. p. 2. What Thomas Michel says here is very true of the African situation.

<sup>14</sup> . Temple, “Inter-Faith Praxis in the African Context,” page 48.

- 
- <sup>15</sup> . Mogen Amstrup, "Lecture on Inter-Religious Dialogue, Multiculturalism and Multireligiousness" delivered at a Seminar on Spirituality, 11-18 October 2003 at Dikonhojskolen, accessed on website [www.oekumeniskungdom.dk/seminar2003](http://www.oekumeniskungdom.dk/seminar2003) on 23/1/2005 p. 4.
- <sup>16</sup> . Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue," page 315.
- <sup>17</sup> . Cited by Mogen Amstrup, "Lecture on Inter-Religious Dialogue, Multiculturalism and Multireligiousness" page p. 4.
- <sup>18</sup> . Thomas Michel, "Toward a Pedagogy of Religious Encounter," page 3.
- <sup>19</sup> . Temple, "Inter-Faith Praxis in the African Context," p. 51.
- <sup>20</sup> . Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue," page 315. The Chiang Mai Consultation led to the formulation of "Guidelines on Dialogue" which was adopted by WCC Central Committee in 1979 and was commended to all Churches for study and action.
- <sup>21</sup> . Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, "Progress in Inter-Religious Dialogue" on website [www.alrisala.org/articls/es/papers/progress.htm](http://www.alrisala.org/articls/es/papers/progress.htm) , accessed on 23/1/2005, p.1
- <sup>22</sup> . Thomas Michel, "Toward a Pedagogy of Religious encounter," page 4.
- <sup>23</sup> . David J. Bosch has identified at least six or seven different strands of *Evangelicals*, namely; (1) Confessional Evangelicals; (2) Pietist Evangelicals; (3) Fundamentalists; (4) Pentecostals; (5) Conservative Evangelicals or Neo-Evangelicals; (6) Ecumenical Evangelicals; and (7) Radical Evangelicals. See his "Ecumenicals and Evangelicals: A Growing Relationship?" *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 40, Nos. 3&4, July-October 1988, pp. 458-9 for more details.
- <sup>24</sup> . Jongeneel and van Engelen, "Contemporary Currents in Missiology," page 454.
- <sup>25</sup> . See Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue," p. 316.
- <sup>26</sup> . Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya, Evangel Publishing House, 1975), p. 130.
- <sup>27</sup> . Ibid. p. 133.
- <sup>28</sup> . Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and Modern Africa* (Oxford, Regnum Books 1992) p. 393.
- <sup>29</sup> . Eugene L. Smith, "The Wheaton Congress in the Eyes of an Ecumenical Observer," *International Review of Missions*, vol. 55, 1966, pp. 480-482. Smith was an observer at the Wheaton Congress.
- <sup>30</sup> . See Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue," p.312
- <sup>31</sup> . Sergio Torres, "The Irruption of the Third World: A Challenge to Theology" in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology* edited by Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (New York, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1983) p. 10.
- <sup>32</sup> . Diego Irarrazaval, "Treads of Faiths in a Texture of Life," *Voices From the Third World*, vol. XXV Nos. 1&2 December 2002, p.59; see also [www.sedos.org/english/irarrazaval.htm](http://www.sedos.org/english/irarrazaval.htm) , p.1 accessed 23/1/2005.
- <sup>33</sup> . Aloysius Pieris, "The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology," pp. 113-114.
- <sup>34</sup> . See the "Final Statement" in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge for Theology*, pp.202f.

---

<sup>35</sup> . Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue," p. 312. Among the dissenting voices from H. Kraemer for example, are A.G. Hogg; H.H. Farmer, T.C. Chao and others.

<sup>36</sup> . Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, pp. 44 and 45 respectively.

<sup>37</sup> . "Final Statement" in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge for Theology*, p. 202

<sup>38</sup> . Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue," p. 313.

<sup>39</sup> . *Ibid.* p. 313. These thoughts were developed by the French Cardinal Jean Danielou and the German theologian Karl Rahner in the 1960s following the spirit of Vatican II.