Chapter 1

New Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue

Introduction

Vladimir Latinovic, Gerard Mannion, and Peter C. Phan

The chapters assembled in this volume developed out of a major international gathering held in Assisi, Italy, from April 17 to 20, 2012. The theme of the gathering was "Where We Dwell in Common: Pathways for Dialogue in the 21st Century"[1] (affectionately referred to as Assisi 2012),[2] and it was the sixth international gathering convened by the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network.[3] More than 250 participants were registered throughout the entire event, with locally based participants and others taking part in some of the program as well, bringing the numbers to well over 300 at various times across the four days. The gathering was about looking beyond the recent and contemporary ecumenical and interreligious horizon—seeking understanding, sharing differing perspectives, looking beyond the narrow and confined viewpoints that remain divisive, and being inspired by ongoing conversations involving participants from at least 55 different countries and many more different contexts and faith communities.

While a majority of participants came from Christian communities or backgrounds, there were also a great many contributions from participants belonging to other faith traditions and a very large number of contributions indeed that reflected on dialogue between different religions, traditions, and religious communities in relation to the past, present, and future. All these contributions brought so very much to the table and enriched the discourse throughout.

So, during the four days of the event, in addition to exploring ecumenical prospects, as well as stumbling blocks in relation to interchurch Christian

dialogue, a great deal of the program was devoted to the extremely important considerations of interreligious relations, conflict, and dialogue, as well as the equally important challenge of fostering dialogue and greater harmony among members of faith communities and those societies in the wider world in which they live out their faith. We also sought to devote a great deal of attention to the challenge of intrafaith and intrachurch dialogue, for divisions within traditions and even within communities are just as pressing a challenge for our times. Each of these areas was engaged not simply in a stand-alone sense as further challenges distinct from Christian ecumenism; rather, we also sought to integrate the discourse pertaining to these multiple challenges of discerning "pathways for dialogue" so that shared methods, lessons, and aspirations could be better brought together and into interaction with one another. In other words, we were equally concerned with being attentive to the task of "wider ecumenism" (also termed "macro" or "total" ecumenism)—that is to say, of dialogue across the human family with people of all faiths and those who do not identify with any specific religion, addressing a multitude of challenging contexts. In short, we were hoping to foster a collective engagement in thinking outside the ecumenical box in order to help clear and navigate pathways for dialogue in the twenty-first century.

Indeed, our modus operandi for the gathering was "thinking outside the box." This did not mean jettisoning the past or rejecting or neglecting other forms of dialogue and ecumenical and interfaith achievement—quite the opposite. We sought not only to encourage innovation but also to discern how we might better learn from the best of those efforts toward enhancing dialogue from the past. We therefore sought to revisit, learn from, renew, and adapt some of the methodologies employed to great effect in historical dialogical conversations. We also sought to learn from more recent successful dialogical ventures and from different ways of approaching dialogue from both within and without the formal ecumenical and interfaith movements and developments at more official levels. Where particular pathways for dialogue have proved innovative and successful, despite the challenges faced in ensuring genuine conversation takes place, we pledged to learn from these stories.

We were also mindful of the need to engage with and learn from "conflictual" forms of encounter, both historically as well in contemporary contexts. We knew there was much to be gained from being attentive to the experiences of those who have traveled the pathways of dialogue in recent decades with significant measures of success and failure alike, and we especially wished to learn from and encourage dialogue from below and from the margins as much as from the institutions and communities pursuing and promoting dialogue in more formal ways. In all, we hoped to discuss, to enhance, and to promote the "science of bridge-building" for our contemporary communities and their shared tomorrows.

We wished Assisi 2012 to be something truly transformative of the perspectives, methods, and approaches to dialogue that every participant attending held. Our aim was to reignite the ecumenical and interreligious flame of dialogue in a positive fashion that would allow the cause to gather renewed momentum for these times.

Chapter 2

Cultural-Linguistic Resources for Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue

Craig A. Phillips

Introduction

The relationship between the part and the whole, the particular and the universal, is a perennial concern of philosophy, theology, and the human sciences. In ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, we find a tension between approaches that seek to ground dialogue in a larger totality and those that resist totality, focusing instead on particularity.

Totalizing approaches are evident in pluralist theologies that identify putative totalities underlying all religions. They are also evident in particularist postliberal approaches that describe religion in a monolithic manner as if each religion were shaped by only one central narrative and cultural-linguistic community. Some particularist approaches that note the incommensurability of ideas, practices, and traditions between religions have concluded that interreligious dialogue is impossible.

Rarely do we find theorists of interreligious dialogue who identify their respective methods as simultaneously pluralist and particularist. Such is the case with S. Mark Heim and Jeannine Hill-Fletcher.[1] Their work would not be possible were it not for George Lindbeck's pioneering work in articulating a cultural-linguistic approach to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Heim's and Hill-Fletcher's projects, in conversation with Lindbeck's model, provide insights that will assist in the rearticulation of a cultural-linguistic approach to interreligious dialogue.

LINDBECK'S CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC MODEL

In *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, George Lindbeck proposed a "cultural-linguistic" paradigm for the study of religion and theology. The intended audience of the book was primarily those engaged in ecumenical dialogue, but the book soon reached a wider audience engaged in all sorts of theological enterprises. In cultural-linguistic approaches, Lindbeck writes, "emphasis is placed on those aspects in which religions resemble languages together with their correlative forms of life and are thus similar to cultures (insofar as these are understood semiotically as reality and value systems—that is, as idioms for the constructing of reality and the living of life)."[2]

The two most important items that hold Lindbeck's theory of doctrine and his theory of religion together are Geertz's 1973 essay "Religion as Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, and Wittgenstein's seminal work of 1958, *Philosophical Investigations*.[3] *The Nature of Doctrine*, as Hugh Nicholson summarizes, "is a kind of synergic homology between Geertz's understanding of a religion as a self-contained cultural system . . . and Wittgenstein's concept of a rule-governed, autonomous language game."[4]

In recent scholarship, both Geertz's definition of religion as a cultural system and Lindbeck's understanding of religion as a rule-governed language game have come under attack. The extent to which Lindbeck's approach depoliticizes religion is also problematic.

The most influential and telling critique of Geertz's definition of religion is that of Talal Asad. Asad argues that Geertz's definition of religion, which purports to be a neutral and thus universal one, is instead culturally and historically specific and based on particular power relationships between the church and the modern state, relationships specific to Europe after the Reformation.[5] No neutral, essential definition of religion as an autonomous essence therefore is possible. Lindbeck shares with Geertz an essentialist understanding of religion.[6] He employs an understanding of religion as a set of cultural patterns shaping social and psychological reality to challenge the "experiential-expressivism" that he locates in the liberal theological project that runs from Schleiermacher through Tillich, Rahner, Tracy, and other modern liberal theologians.

What Lindbeck shares, therefore, with the liberal theologians from whom he hopes to distance his postliberal cultural-linguistic model is an understanding of religion as autonomous from the domain of politics and power. Lindbeck implicitly acknowledges this, at least partially, in his assertion that religion is prior to experience and constitutive of it, but what is missing in Lindbeck's account is a more fully thematized understanding of those particular relationships of power within communities (including religious ones) that act through fundamental tensions and social antagonisms within the communities themselves to bring cohesion to them. This criticism is more fully developed in Kathryn Tanner's understanding of the political dimensions of doctrine that "function to mobilize group identity through social opposition."[7] Lindbeck's intratextual approach, on the other hand, tends to make religious meaning and truth immanent rather than in reference to external

Chapter 3

Interreligious Dialogue in a Polarized World

Richard Penaskovic

We live in a polarized world. In Europe, we have recently witnessed tug-of-war between the rich, frugal countries in Northern Europe (mainly the Scandinavian countries and Germany), who blame Greece, Spain, and Italy for living *la dolce vita*, and needing to be bailed out in order to keep the Eurozone intact. In the United States, one notices a nation evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans so that there exists gridlock in Congress with the result that both political parties are reluctant to find permanent solutions to budgetary and fiscal matters.

In the Middle East, civil war has erupted in Syria between Alawites (and other groups led by President Bashar al-Assad's Baath government) and the Free Syrian Army, whose members include Sunni Muslims (who constitute about 75 percent of the population) and the Kurds, who represent about 10 percent of the people in Syria.[1] This war, which has lasted since the spring of 2011, has been very bloody, with well over 130,000 killed by the turn of 2014 and millions of refugees both internally displaced and fleeing the country because of the tragic and deadly conflict engulfing their homeland. One wonders if any regime like that in Syria can last long if it targets its own civilian population. At some point, both sides must engage in a dialogue.

On the religious front, until the recent past, interreligious dialogue frequently had an apologetic purpose—namely, that of defending one's own religion or proving the other's position wrong,[2] rather than learning from another faith-tradition. However, interreligious dialogue has taken on renewed importance today for at least three reasons: first, global terrorism such as the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 9/11; second, the fact that religion appears to be a contributing factor to conflict around the globe (e.g., think of the violence in Nigeria between Muslims and Christians or the trouble between religious groups in Indonesia, the Sudan, or in

Kashmir);[3] and third, the heightened awareness of the public and religious leaders about global climate change and the importance of living in a sustainable way.

However, the world religions may be a saving grace—that is, a force for good. The religions of the world bring a lot to the table: moral and spiritual authority, a large number of followers, the ability to create community, material resources, and the ability to shape worldviews.[4] The world religions can also be a positive force in the struggle to save the environment, and by working for peace and justice on the local level, helping, at least indirectly, to reduce the risk of global terrorism. For example, the three Abrahamic religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) emphasize compassion and love of neighbor and are monotheistic. Religious leaders like the Pope, the Dalai Lama, and the Ayatollahs in Iran have significant moral and spiritual power. Regular clergy in war-torn areas have unusual authority—for example, the *ulema* in Iran, Christian missionaries in South America, or rabbis in Israel.[5] It seems that in today's broken and polarized world, interreligious dialogue is sorely needed to bring about peace on earth. However, interreligious dialogue has its own inherent difficulties as we shall see.

This essay consists of four distinct but related parts. It begins by noting the barriers to interreligious dialogue in general. The second part looks at interreligious dialogue on the intellectual and theological levels. The third section speaks to the urgent need for the world religions to take joint action to save the planet, particularly in the face of global climate change. The final part gives some hints on what concrete and specific actions religious leaders and their congregations can take to save the Earth, particularly by living a simpler lifestyle and resisting the urge to consume vital resources.

Barriers to Dialogue

There are a plethora of barriers to interreligious dialogue. It would be beyond the parameters of this essay to identify all of them. Allow me to point out four barriers to dialogue.

First, in the past century, there have been some exchanges between Muslims and Christians or between Buddhists and Hindus, but nothing like the interactions we see today regularly because of the Internet, cell phones, and global migration. Part of the difficulty in regard to dialogue on the theological level is this: the world religions are like the world's oceans—that is, just as there is a depth and complexity to the world's oceans, so too is there a depth and profundity in comprehending the world religions. For this reason, until the recent past, the curriculum of Jewish or Christian colleges and seminaries focused almost exclusively on Judaism or Christianity. Professors had done all they could to understand one world religion in depth without trying to understand the other world religions. And the same phenomenon occurred in regard to the Muslim *madrasas* where the focus was entirely on understanding the complexities of Islam.[6]

Second, assumptions, prejudices, and bias on the part of the dialogue partners make dialogue difficult. Suspicions persist that Christians engaging

Chapter 4

Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus?

What Has the Catholic Church Learned about Interfaith Dialogue since Vatican II?

Sandra Mazzolini

What has the (Roman) Catholic Church learned about interfaith dialogue since Vatican II? It is not simple to answer this question, since dialogue involves various subjects and levels.[1] From the point of view of the *subjects*, what the Catholic Church had learned can be evaluated both *objectively* and *subjectively*. In the *first case*, the stress has to be put on the specific form of dialogue about which we are talking (i.e., doctrinal dialogue, dialogue of life, etc.). If we compare these various forms of dialogue, we may note a multiplicity of experiences and results. Consequently, it is inaccurate to evaluate them in a homogeneous way. In the *second case*, we must consider the "actors" who are involved in interfaith dialogue or, on the contrary, are at odds with it. In this case, we must also be careful about their belonging (or not) to groups, associations, and so on. From the point of view of various *levels*, there is no doubt that we may observe differences and oscillations between magisterial teachings, theological thought, catechetical content, and the common sense of Catholics and people in general. There are many ways to explain these differences and oscillations, for instance, living or not living in an interfaith context; in any case, they not only depend on personal sensitivity or biography but often refer to objective data, such as the misunderstanding or the misuse of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

The two purposes of this article are to introduce some remarks about the interpretation of the aforementioned axiom and to argue the possibility of salvation outside the church. The essay comprises two parts: (1) an overview of the history of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* and (2) discerning the salvific presence of the Holy Spirit outside the visible boundaries of the church.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE AXIOM "*EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS*"

The phrase *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, whose main theological focuses are the divine salvation intended to all human beings and the salvific means offered by the Triune God, has a long history. It has been used and interpreted differently over the centuries, and emphasis has been placed either on the word "church" or on the theological concept of "salvation," according to specific historical and ecclesial contexts. Consequently, the use and the interpretation of this axiom have depended on the specific understanding of what/who church is, as well as of what salvation is.[2]

The axiom was formalized in the third century AD.[3] Many problems, both theoretical and practical, arose from the complex embodiment of the church in various geographical and cultural areas, which entailed a more accurate doctrinal elaboration of various issues, inter alia the role of the church in the salvific project of God, the means of salvation such as profession of faith, sacraments, and so on. In general terms, we may note that the background of the axiom was not the question of the salvation of others but problems and correlated themes, which concerned both the belonging to the one and unique church of Christ and the means of salvation.

Authors such as Origen, Cyprian, Augustine, and Fulgentius (bishop of Ruspe) variously emphasized the necessity of the church as means of salvation. Origen coined the phrase "*extra ecclesiam nemo salvatur*," whose meaning depends both on his understanding of the church as the *ecclesia ex Gentibus* that is inserted in the *ecclesia ex Judaeis* and on the universal dimension of the salvation, whose fulfillment is the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.[4] According to Cyprian, "*salus extra ecclesiam non est.*" This axiom recurs in the *Epistula* (*Ep.*) 73:21, whose main theme is the unity and uniqueness of the church. The text belongs to a group of letters, which the bishop of Carthage dedicated to the controversy over baptism; in *Ep.* 73, the axiom refers to relationship between the church and sacraments.[5]

In the background of the controversy against the Donatist Church, Augustine reaffirmed that "*salus extra ecclesiam non est*"; the bishop of Hippo reread the phrase from the point of view of the salvific mediation of the church, as well as of the salvific means.[6] In Augustine, as "the understanding of the Church began to expand, also Cyprian's take on '*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*' acquired a new value: in Augustine it was the value of the 'heavenly church' which embraced all the righteous in human history, from Abel to the last righteous person."[7] Fulgentius put special stress on the issue of the means of salvation, in particular the Christological and Trinitarian faith and its public profession and the belonging to the *Catholica*. He acknowledged some elements of the African Christian tradition, such as the relationship between the one and unique church and salvation. At the same time, he modified the ecclesiological model drawn by Augustine in a restrictive sense.[8]

Therefore, these authors used the phrase "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" in a context in which schisms, heresy, and persecutions were calling the ecclesial communional identity into question. In fact, schisms, heresy, and persecutions were affecting both the intraecclesial relationships and those of the church

Chapter 5

Reading Together

Revelation and Jewish-Christian Relations

Michael Barnes

In his well-known but controversial *A Jewish Theology*, Louis Jacobs argues from the historical and cultural heterogeneity of the scriptural texts that the Bible is the *record* of how human beings have been confronted by and respond to God. Revelation does not mean that God conveys detailed propositions to human beings but rather that God enables us to have an encounter with God in a "specially intense form." "It is God Himself," he says, "who is disclosed in revelation. Revelation is an event not a series of propositions about God and his demands."[1]

This distinction between God's work of self-disclosure and what Jacobs calls the "vocabulary of worship," which gives rise to the specifically Jewish way of life, raises an awkward question: How do we learn to read the words that make up the text of holy scripture in such a way that God's own unchanging Word is allowed to speak through it? Jacobs refers to that lovely Talmudic story in which Moses is transported forward in time to the school of Rabbi Akiba. Much to his consternation, he finds that he cannot understand what the Rabbi is talking about. His mind is set at rest when he hears Akiba respond to a question from one of his pupils: "Master, how do you know this?" Akiba answers that it was a rule given by Moses on Sinai. Akiba has not invented a new Torah; he has learned from study and faithful practice how to bring the principles inscribed in Torah into dialogue with the ever-changing exigencies of daily living.

It is not my purpose in this brief article to address the more conceptual problems about the interpretation of sacred texts. I begin here because Jacobs's words echo the extraordinary shift that has taken place in Catholic scripture studies in the last century. In *Dei Verbum* (*DV*), the Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation, we find a distinction between the event and the content of revelation; there too, using rather different language, we find

reference to the continuing work of interpretation, which is necessary if God's Word is to be made manifest. *DV* is important, however, not just because it marks the retrieval of a biblically based approach to theology in the Catholic Church, but because it places the prayerful study of sacred scripture at the very heart of the community of faith. It is not too much of an overstatement to say that since Vatican II, the Catholic Church has found a new "vocabulary of worship," one shared with Jewish brothers and sisters, another intimately related community, which is also formed by response to God's call.

I am reminded of a remark of Emil Fackenheim. Writing in the shadow of the Shoah, he says that "after what has happened Christians must read the old book as if it were new, that is, as if they had never read it before . . . Jews too must read their old-new book as if they had never read it before. How would it be if a Christian reading-together came about—one that has never happened before?"[2]

Such a "reading-together" is beginning to happen. I do not just mean remarkable practices like Scriptural Reasoning; I am also struck by the attention being given by Christian scripture scholars to Jewish dialogical philosophy and traditional forms of Talmudic commentary. The "Old Testament" is no longer the preliminary to the Gospel narrative, the final relic of "late Judaism" but a highly complex narrative made up of books of *Torah*, *Neviim*, and *Ketuvim*. That Christians are at least aware that there is another tradition of interpretation alongside theirs that represents another "vocabulary of worship" is a major step forward.

The question, of course, is how two different *records* of the event of God's work of self-revelation can coexist without being made subject to the sort of supersessionist logic that has dogged Christian accounts of Judaism for centuries. What I want to argue is that we have to look to religious practice; to how scripture is read, prayed, and studied; and above all, to how the ever-repeated call of God recorded and discerned in the text of scripture goes on forming and re-forming living communities of faith. Such a sketch of a "revelation-based" dialogue is not meant to propose some shared theology of revelation that can, by a dialectical sleight-of-hand, magically join the two traditions together. It is rather to set the renewal of Jewish-Christian relations, and of interreligious relations more generally, within the broader context of a mediated participation in what Walter Brueggemann calls the "theological phenomenon" that is Israel.[3]

Beyond Supersessionism

Let me start with the problem—the term "supersessionist logic"—and the issues it raises. Christian responses to Judaism have tended to emphasize a point of divergence within a single history. According to this narrative, at some moment in the early first century, Christianity emerged as the true witness to God's revelation—more exactly, the completion of all that had gone before. Put very simply: the particularity of God's election of Israel has given way to the universality of God's self-revelation in Christ. What began with the call of Abraham has been fulfilled through the New Covenant established

Chapter 6

Emptiness and Otherness

Negative Theology and the Language of Compassion

Susie Paulik Babka

In one of his most famous poems, "i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart),"[1] E. E. Cummings masterfully expresses the relationship between emptiness ("the wonder that's keeping the stars apart") and compassion ("anywhere I go, you go, and whatever is done by only me is your doing") such that the space between the stars places the stars in relation to each other. The alterity between Cummings's "stars"—a metaphor for the alterity of lovers—is necessary to what they are, since their alterity, or separateness, or difference from each other "is possible only if the other is other with respect to a term whose essence is to remain at the point of departure, to serve as entry into the relation, to be the same not relatively but absolutely,"[2] as the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas argues. For Cummings, and for Levinas, there is no "I" without "Other." The identity as an "I" is utterly dependent on what is Other, "who disturbs the being at home with oneself."[3] Similarly, the paradox of distinction and unity that is the dynamic of relationship is for Cummings the "deepest secret nobody knows"—"the root of the root and the bud of the bud"[4]—that no "thing," and certainly no person, no "self," finds its existence within itself, in isolation, or independently, but rather finds existence through what is *other* than "self." Hence the "deepest secret": any existence is by definition interdependent—"being" arises in interdependency. Such is life lived *ecstatically*, the word rooted in the Greek *ek-stasis*, to *stand outside*: to be ecstatic is to venture outside the confines of the self.

Beyond the in-itself and for-itself, there is human nakedness, writes Levinas: the nakedness of the Other that cries out to me its strangeness to the world, the word of God in the human face. The primal experience of subjectivity consists in encountering a person who does not reflect my own face

back to me; hence the experience of alterity for Levinas is the condition of being a "self." The first violence within mercy,[5] Levinas asserts, is in negating the self to prepare a space for the Other. The alterity of the Other cannot but unsettle the ego-self; the Other interrupts any attempt by the ego-self to tame the world, to "know" it, to claim it as one's own (this he calls "totality of the same"). The alterity of the Other "is the presence of infinity breaking the closed circle of totality" and "puts into question the world possessed" such that the face of the Other opens the possibility of meaning.[6] This transcending of the self is then the beginning of human subjectivity. The face of the Other calls into question the ego/"I" as a being for itself.

This primordial movement of subjectivity is the first ethical gesture for Levinas. Such is also the essence of what it is to be religious: to be bound to something always just beyond our grasp, experiencing an awakening to an essential dependence on what shatters the "self." For Levinas, the alterity of the Other is revelatory of infinity because the Other embodies a difference that will never be comprehended. In order to encounter the Other, I must be willing to abandon my perceptions by admitting their inadequacy to attain the reality of the Other. I will only draw near to reality, and so to what it means to be in the presence of the Other and be present to the Other, when I open a space for the Other that preserves the uniqueness and alterity of the Other, like a womb waiting to be filled. This space for the Other refers to the kenosis, the self-emptying, that prepares a place for the Other.

In this essay, I wish to explore affinities between kenosis, the Greek term adopted in Christianity meaning "self-emptying," and sunyata, which in Mahayana Buddhism refers to dynamic emptiness,[7] to encourage apophatic or negative theology in interreligious dialogue, particularly concerning the problem of catastrophic suffering. For me, the problem of suffering is the arena in which theology is done: the God of both Hebrew and Christian scripture is manifest as irrevocably committed to the destitute and oppressed, which calls all to task. This essay wishes to advocate for the urgency of those who suffer catastrophe as our immediate concern, such that even abstract notions of self and transcendence are understood primarily in the service of compassionate action. Jesus reminds us to deny our individual selves, take up the cross, and follow him (Matt. 16:24)—the space created for the Other in the denial of the priority of the self means assuming the urgency of catastrophic suffering, which is how we realize the divine commitment to the poor. To paraphrase Blessed Oscar Romero, "The poor are the ones who tell us what the world is."

Emmanuel Levinas uses the term kenosis to point to the simultaneity of divine transcendence and immanence that opens a space for the Other to affect the divine being, the God who is both beyond the world and inhabits the misery of the suffering creature. For Levinas, the emergence of human subjectivity through self-emptying for the sake of the Other provides the "necessary conditions for the association of God with the . . . being of the worlds."[8] The Other—the Stranger—"tells me what the world is."

Chapter 7

"Landmines" and "Vegetables"

The Hope and Perils of Recent Jewish Critiques of Christianity

Peter Admirand

Historically, most Christians had no qualms stating their views of Judaism and the Jewish people. All too frequently, however, what was said was far from Christian. Words were often as potent as "landmines."[1] They were implanted (even if unconsciously) within the Christian testament,[2] theological treatises, homilies, and literature. Some of these mines did not explode immediately, but their presence and ubiquity within Christian writing and thought virtually ensured that under certain pretexts, they could be deployed and triggered. The history of Christian treatment of the Jewish people might be read as one long series of such "explosions," from discriminatory laws, ghettoization, and forced conversions, to pogroms—and ultimately, genocide.

For much of Christian history, what Jews thought of Christians, however, was generally neither known nor sought. Especially post-Constantine, most Jews in Christendom were in no position to speak openly about Christianity. Opportunities for equal, respectful dialogical encounters were rare. A few hidden phrases in the Talmud, some lines among the corpus of Maimonides, and a few slanderous accounts like the medieval *Toledot Yeshu* (*Life of Jesus*) were often the extent.[3]

In this chapter, I will assess some contemporary Jewish critiques of Christianity. Formulated amid warming relations among Jews and Christians, some of the critiques are nevertheless hard-hitting and deeply challenging toward all facets of Christian belief, such as Christology, the Trinity, and the historical validity of gospel passages. To shift the metaphor, while Jews had to struggle against "landmines" planted by Christians, Christians now must face eating various (theological) "vegetables" that Jews present to them. As with a child's view of vegetables, these Jewish critiques may not appear too appetizing,

but they are needed for growth and development. They can also serve as an important test of the state and future of Jewish-Christian relations and dialogue. For example, Alan Berger and David Patterson argue that a "defining element" within Christian doctrine has been a deeply negative portrayal and interpretation of Jewish life and teachings. Especially when confronted with the Holocaust, Berger and Patterson wonder if the change needed by Christians will result in a Christianity that "may no longer be able to recognize itself as Christian."[4]

How would most Christians respond to such trenchant critiques of their faith by Jewish thinkers? Could it lead to greater dialogue or something more perilous? When speaking of interreligious dialogue, one hears of the need to be honest ad nauseam. Rarely do we hear of the religious confidence and deep faith or, more commonly, thick skin that is needed to respond to—and, perhaps, endure—such criticism in good spirit and trust. In this context, it is a question of whether Christian faith is mature enough to confront and listen to such revealing appraisals. While examples of tempered responses are increasingly common within many scholarly Christian works, legitimate doubt remains in regards to the majority of Christians. Glancing historically, one must be cautious. While this chapter cannot delve deeply into contemporary Christian responses to these Jewish critiques, some will be offered.[5] Ultimately, I am contending that within Jewish-Christian dialogue, Christians must seek both to cleanse the messes they have created and to continue repenting and reeducating themselves; in short, planting theological vegetables for interfaith relations in the long run is preferable to risking "landmines."

The Good News First

Before presenting some contemporary Jewish critiques of Christianity, I will contextualize the material I am consulting. I am not looking for false headlines that promote a rejuvenated Jewish voice telling Christians what they really think of them. Any Jewish narrative (like any Christian one) is deeply divided and diverse. Furthermore, a Jewish crisis of identity and commitment has also been well documented.[6]

The Jewish voices cited here are all involved in Jewish-Christian relations. The main point for now is to recognize how more and more Jewish groups and individual statements praise Christians for their post-Shoah attempts to address previous failures.[7] Going further, many Jews are beginning to see why the figure of Jesus need not be so polarizing and divisive.[8]

One cannot say enough about the sea change occurring in Christian-Jewish relations, even amid various setbacks. Crucially, many Jewish scholars and groups have recognized how an increasing number of Christian churches and individuals have irrevocably broken from many of its insensate and nullifying beliefs and traditions, thereby "minesweeping" and "demining" anti-Judaic passages and assertions within Christianity. Consider the following developments among many Christians:

Chapter 8

Interreligious Dialogue as Depth and Frontier

Abraham Joshua Heschel's Depth Theology and the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus

Joseph Palmisano, SJ

Introduction

Abraham Joshua Heschel argues, "Humility and contrition seem to be absent where most required—in theology. But humility is the beginning and end of religious thinking, the secret test of faith. There is no truth without humility, no certainty without contrition."[1] To be humble is to be close to the ground. It is to be in touch with something other than ourselves. In being close to the ground of our existence, we may begin again to listen for the return of the other. The footsteps, at first a far-off echo, become like a beating heart, approaching me, desiring to meet me—wanting to break through the ground of my existence, breaching my silent walls with a greeting.

I will explore in this essay how Heschel's concept of depth theology may push Christians and Jews toward the new ground of a more prophetic living in the world. From this reading of Heschel on depth theology, I will then propose how this theology may serve as a kind of lens beyond the bifurcated extremes of either suspicion or trust for theological discourse.

A *hermeneutic from depth* may contribute to a renewal of solidarity through *teshuva* (return through seeking forgiveness), where the living tradition of Judaism is reawakened in Christianity. Let us first explore Heschel on depth theology in order to construct a hermeneutic from depth. This hermeneutic may provide us with a vehicle for exploring how the echo of *Nostra Aetate* (*NA*)—even with some bumps along the way over these last 50 years—is

encouraging Catholicism to move toward a more sensitive and eschatologically awakened relationship with Judaism through *teshuva*.

Against this horizon, I will then explore how the language of "depth," from Heschel, and "frontier," from the documents of the most recent General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, critically advance a *teshuva* project. The harmonization of "depth" with "frontier," when read concomitantly with Heschel's insight on *kavanah* (inner participation) and Emmanuel Mounier's insights from his work *Personalism*, reveals how Jews and Jesuits share the common *tikkun olam* project of promoting dialogue and understanding with otherness. However, in order to hear how a Jewish voice from depth is calling Christians and, in particular, the Jesuits, we must first turn to Heschel.

HESCHEL ON DEPTH

Our consanguinity—*the blood we share*, so basic to our existence and yet the very ground from which we begin as children "to sense the truth" and "authenticity of religious concern"—mysteriously unites humanity on the same corporeal plane. In this sense, Jews and Christians share *a primordial memory* in which "*the antecedents of religious commitment*, the presuppositions of faith"[2] are unitive categories that draw us into a shared "depth theology" with one another.

A *depth* connotes a vigor and strength, a beginning again *ex radice*. It bespeaks a concern for "the total situation of man and his attitudes towards life and the world."[3] Depth carries the promises of a new solidarity. While "theologies" have the capacity to "divide us" when they become reduced to ideology, it is "depth theology" that "unites us": "Depth theology seeks to meet the person in moments in which the whole person is involved, in moments which are affected by all a person thinks, feels, and acts. It draws upon that which happens to man in moments of confrontation with ultimate reality."[4]

This confrontation is waged within the mysterious abyss of becoming concerned with others who have been treated as less than persons. Paying attention becomes kenosis, since my mindfulness of the other is also a prophetic attention. The prophet proclaims, "Look!" In other words, *pay attention*. A person may never be my utility; the other is never some *thing*; rather, the other is some *one*. I have nothing to gain from the other except the gift the other freely gives. We move together as persons beyond a shallow way of relating and into the deep brilliance of a more universal concern(s), and this deeply imbedded Christian concern comes to Christianity from the Jewish people, who, in being refugees, also became liberated: "When the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, two things happened: the waters split, and between man and God all distance was gone. There was no veil, no vagueness. There was only his presence: This is my God, the Israelite exclaimed."[5]

Heschel concludes that while "most miracles that happen in space are lost in the heart," depth theology "evokes" the "spontaneity of the person." Without this "responding and appreciation"—this "inner identification" or "sympathy of identification" with the ineffable—*without this deep memory*, all

Chapter 9

The Genuine Gains in Twentieth-Century Jewish-Christian Dialogue[1]

Aaron Gross and Kate Yanina DeConinck

What has been gained from Jewish-Christian dialogue in the last century?[2] Of course, a comprehensive assessment of the positive effects of Jewish-Christian dialogue is a far larger project than can be undertaken here, and further, it is far from obvious both how to distinguish "dialogue" from other Jewish-Christian encounters and how to understand what constitutes a "gain." Rather than attempt a necessarily incomplete survey, this essay focuses primarily on the US context and on Jewish-Catholic relations. It argues for one specific and often overlooked gain: the new spaces of Jewish-Christian encounter (if not always dialogue) in academia. Further, it offers one specific and related caution: an argument for greater attentiveness to disagreement and difference as we move further into the twenty-first century—an attentiveness that is especially appropriate for the academic environment.

To offer specificity to our discussion of academia as a place where Jewish-Christian dialogue has seen important gains in the twentieth century, this essay reports on the results of a study of the proliferation of tenure-track positions in Jewish studies at Catholic universities in the United States. The results paint a clear picture of an important kind of gain in Jewish-Christian dialogue: a gain in the infrastructure that makes dialogue possible. However, to speak of the actual gains in dialogue—gains not in the infrastructure that sustains dialogue but in the depth, richness, relevance, and compassion of the dialogue itself—we wish to raise questions more than provide conclusions. One reason it is hard to quickly point to clear "gains" is that gains are defined in very different ways. For some, as we will see, the urgent need of dialogue seems to be finding areas of agreement. Considering the case of *Dabru Emet* ("speaking truth" in Hebrew), a landmark document of Jewish-Christian

relations tellingly subtitled "A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity," this essay follows earlier Jewish voices, including that of the Jewish thinker and Biblicist Jon Levenson, who have argued that there has in fact been too much emphasis on "where we dwell in common."

General Observations

Speaking very broadly, and especially speaking about the US context, it is hard to dispute that Jewish-Christian relations are far better now than they were a century ago. Taking Roman Catholic–Jewish relations as an example, we find it impossible to see the overtures of respect to Jews and Judaism that came out of Vatican II and, later, the papacy of Pope John Paul II as anything less than major events in the last millennium of Jewish-Catholic relations.[3] Up until the end of World War II, it was still conceivable that even the most prominent Christian leaders in the United States could be openly anti-Semitic, as for example in the case of the "the Radio priest" Father Charles E. Coughlin, whose radio addresses at one time reached 40 million Americans but who was ultimately silenced and died in relative obscurity in 1979.[4] To quickly grasp how dramatically the public acceptability of Christian anti-Semitism has changed in the US context, consider the generational shifts in the perception of Coughlin that can be seen in the microcosm of coauthor Aaron Saul Gross's life or the life of many American Jews born in the 1970s. Gross was six years old when Coughlin died. His grandparents on his Jewish side found Coughlin's association of Jews with what Coughlin called "the mystical body of Satan"[5] fearsome; Gross's parents were aware of Coughlin's teachings but thought little of them. However, American Jews of Gross's generation and younger are likely to know nothing of Coughlin (unless they are writing an essay such as this). More important, they often know nothing, at least by direct experience, of what the French historian Jules Isaac has aptly described as the Church's "teaching of contempt" of which Coughlin is a late representative. There was nothing inevitable about this reduction in anti-Semitism; the US and Canadian contexts contrast with, for example, the far more ambivalent status of Jews in Argentina, the largest population of Jews in Latin America.[6] How can we think more carefully about some of the contours of this (at least comparative) success story of American Jewish-Christian relations?

Academia and Interfaith Infrastructure

In a recent article in *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, Mary Christine Athans comments that the previous three decades have been marked by "excitement—almost an element of romance—in ecumenical and interfaith relationships" between Jews and Catholics.[7] Athans goes on to helpfully identify "three areas where this blossomed . . . (1) academia, (2) religious institutional structures, and (3) local 'grass roots' developments" and is one of the few scholars that has pointed specifically to changes in universities.[8] The very existence of the tenure-track faculty line in the study of Judaism that Gross

Chapter 10

The Dominican Friar Serge de Beaurecueil's *Praxis Mystica* and Muslim-Christian Encounter[1]

Minlib Dallh, OP

"Are there locks upon our hearts?" That is the question posed by Kenneth Cragg when considering whether we are "adequately susceptible, in our thinking and our relationships, to the content and inward force of the non-Christian other."[2] The Christian discipleship of Catholic religious men and women living as guests in the *dār al-Islam* is a poignant nexus to apply this question.[3] This essay focuses on the *praxis mystica*, or "*être l'autre chez l'autre*," of the Dominican friar Serge de Beaurecueil (d. 2005). He was a founding member of L' Institut Dominicain des Etudes Orientales du Caire (IDEO)[4] and the foremost expert on the life and works of the Ḥanbalī Sufi 'Abdullah Anṣārī of Herāt (d. 1089).[5] This study is not particularly concerned with de Beaurecueil's erudite scholarship or the incompatibilities of Islam with Christian praxis. Rather, it focuses on the friar's life experience in Kabul (Afghanistan), which points to the possibility of a genuine hospitality between Christians and Muslims. This investigation is a window into de Beaurecueil's spirituality or mystical theology, which is Catholic and Dominican in scope, dialogical in commitment, intuitive, and yet practical in its goals.

De Beaurecueil is not well known among French Catholic scholars of the mystical tradition of Islam, and unlike his confreres George Anawati (d. 1994) and Jacques Jomier (d. 2008), the Dominican Order and the IDEO have not given due attention to his life journey. This essay is an attempt to remedy that situation. De Beaurecueil's *praxis mystica* in Kabul is best expressed in the following titles: *Un Chrétien en Afghanistan* (*A Christian in Afghanistan*), *Nous avons partagé le pain et le sel* (*We Shared Bread and Salt*), and *Mes enfants de*

Kaboul (*My Children of Kabul*).[6] First, a biographical sketch is necessary to provide a background for this remarkable Dominican life.

A Brief Biographical Curve

About a mile away from the celebrated Sunni University-Mosque al-Azhar in "Islamic Cairo" (Egypt), the Dominican friar Antonin Jaussen (d. 1962) built an impressive priory at First Maṣnā' al-Tarābīsh Road. Today, the pearl of the priory is the library of the IDEO, named after one of the founding members, Georges G. Anawati (d. 1994). It is within the walls of this priory and its library that de Beaurecueil would start a unique journey that would lead him to Afghanistan in the footsteps of 'Abdullah Anṣārī of Herāt. Dominique Avon rightly remarks, "Within the vast scholarship of mystical Islam, Serge de Beaurecueil crafted a path of astonishing originality."[7]

Born into an aristocratic family at his maternal grandfather's house on August 28, 1917, de Beaurecueil's birthplace was in the luxurious sixteenth arrondissement of Paris, at 42 rue Copernic, the present location of the Lebanese Embassy. De Beaurecueil joined the Dominican Province of France in 1935 and was sent to Amiens for a year of Novitiate. Religious life meant a flight from the ordinary world to consecrate oneself to God. The friar's entire epistemology and hermeneutic of the non-Christian other took root at the famous Dominican studium Le Saulchoir in Belgium and France, continued in Cairo, and blossomed in Kabul.

Very early, de Beaurecueil showed a keen independent spirit and a gift for languages. After his initial formation at Le Saulchoir, he arrived at Cairo without a solid background in mystical Islam. His confrères Anawati and Jomier opted respectively for classical Islamic philosophy, and contemporary Islamic thought and modern Qur'anic commentaries as their fields of scholarship. De Beaurecueil settled on the mystical dimensions of Islam.[8] However, how did he embark on the study of the life and work of 'Abdullāh Anṣārī of Herāt? Tradition[9] has it among the Dominican friars in Cairo that Anawati prompted de Beaurecueil to have a conversation with Osman Ismā'il Yaḥyā (d. 1997).[10] Yaḥyā was a regular reader at the library of the IDEO and a close friend of the Dominican friars. According to Jean Marie Mérigoux, Yaḥyā told de Beaurecueil, "Who am I to counsel you? I can just say this much: by far two Ṣūfī masters have influenced me most: Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309) and 'Abdullāh Anṣārī of Herāt (d. 1089)."[11] De Beaurecueil took Yaḥyā's advice seriously and consulted Louis Massignon (d. 1962), who wrote back, "Do not hesitate, Anṣārī is crucially important and no one has seriously studied him. A few years ago, I spent a night long in prayer at his tomb."[12] In addition, an Iraqi Jesuit, Paul Nwyia, was already working on Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh with remarkable expertise.[13] The only option left was Anṣārī. This episode lends itself to a popular Chinese saying: "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

Above all, Anṣārī's Ḥanbalīsm in theology and his staunch attachment to orthodoxy, in this case the literal meaning of the Qur'an and the Sunna, afforded his teaching respectability and reliability in the eyes of de Beaurecueil.

Chapter 11

Maria Pontifex

The Virgin Mary as a Bridge Builder in Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Lyn Holness

Introduction

In 2008, I published a book titled *Journeying with Mary*. Written from a Protestant perspective, the study showed that far from being an obstacle to ecumenical dialogue, Mary presents an ecumenical opportunity, assuming the role of a pontifex (bridge building) figure. In the course of this research, I became aware of the esteemed place of Mary in the Qur'an, extending her ecumenical potential beyond the borders of Christianity to include Muslim-Christian dialogue as well. South Africa and notably Cape Town, where I live, has a large Muslim population. With Muslim colleagues, neighbors, and friends; a local church community engaged in Christian-Jewish-Muslim exchange; and participation in local interfaith initiatives, my work is grounded in day-to-day experience. Most recently, I have been involved in exchange with a local Shi'ite Muslim women's group who initially invited me to give an address on Mary and spirituality. Drawing on this experience in conjunction with relevant theological and other literary resources, this essay introduces the idea of Mary's potential as a bridge builder—Mary as a way into dialogue. It considers her position in both Christianity and Islam, explores points of contact and also divergence between the traditions, and identifies challenges, opportunities, and limitations that have emerged along the way.

Locating the Theme

This essay emerges from my engagement for over a year and a half with the women of a particular Muslim community in Cape Town. Our coming

together had its roots in my participation in a local interfaith forum on the topic of the Virgin Mary, which was followed by an invitation to speak at a women's meeting on Mary and spirituality. This meeting, the Annual International Women's Day Programme, is hosted locally each year by the Al-Kauthar Women's Jama'at of the Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre in Ottery, Cape Town.[1] It celebrates the birthday of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, whose role in some forms of Islamic piety, notably the Shi'ite tradition, is analogous to that of Mary in Christianity.

The invitation came as a surprise to me as a Christian. It made more sense with the discovery that inter- and intrareligious dialogue is included in the Ahlul Bayt Foundation's commitment to promote principles of justice and equity in all aspects of personal and social life.[2] Other areas of commitment are equal opportunity for all, gender equality, and antiracism. Drawing on these principles, the Al-Kauthar Women's Jama'at calls women inter alia to a role beyond that of caregiver: becoming a force for social justice.[3]

Participation in this event (attended by some 250 women) together with subsequent interaction with the community persuaded me that the principle of embracing Mary as an ecumenical opportunity rather than regarding her as a stumbling block to dialogue (a long time in the learning by Christians) might be extended to include Christian-Muslim relations as well. My own interest in the Virgin Mary began in the course of doctoral research and gained momentum as it evolved into a book on Mary written from a Protestant perspective.[4] Along the way, I was surprised to discover that Mary features prominently in the Qur'an as one of Islam's most esteemed women, a point to which we shall return.

I am aware of other work being done in this area and have been informed by it,[5] but I hope to contribute to the conversation from my own particular perspective. There are two features that I bring to the conversation that should be borne in mind. First, it is based primarily on existential rather than scholarly engagement. The presentation on Mary and spirituality was the occasion of an ecumenical encounter on which I subsequently began to reflect theologically. I am not sufficiently schooled in the dynamics and nuances within Islam, not least the Shi'ite position both internationally and in my own community, to offer more at this stage than an informed faith reflection.

Second, my engagement with the Al-Kauthar group is essentially a discourse between women—women representing two faith traditions. The series of encounters between the Muslim women and a small group from my local church community has provided the context for the discourse that follows and the framework around which the essay is structured. As such, it will foreground a number of issues relevant particularly to women.

Maria Pontifex

According to Jaroslav Pelikan, one of the "most profound and most persistent roles of the Virgin Mary in history has been her function as a bridge-builder to other traditions, other cultures, and other religions."[6] The term "pontifex," derived from the Latin for bridge builder, has a Roman pagan origin.

Chapter 12

Christian and Islamic Conceptions of Public Civility

A Consideration of "The Human Good"

Richard S. Park

Introduction

With the rise of religious plurality and a global religious resurgence, the need for constructing a framework of public civility[1] is evident. In this essay, I consider specifically Muslim-Christian plurality along with Muslim and Christian perspectives on the construction of civility in plural social contexts. I begin by delineating several main features and functions of civil society, continue by analyzing and evaluating major contemporary theories, and conclude by offering a vision of public civility based on what I find to be a theoretically necessary notion of "the human good." My aim is to provide an analysis that might result in a conceptually valid and empirically viable construction of public civility in religiously plural contexts within liberal democracies.

Two Kinds of Civility

The notion of civility can be expressed in two main ways. First, it is construed by thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Peter Berger as follows: In modern liberal democracies, there tends to emerge an expanding political statism on the one hand and a fragmentary relativism of the private sphere on the other. Thus, as Habermas notes, there is a crucial need for a "mediating structure [that acts as a] go-between linking state and society."[2] Similarly, Berger speaks of the "mediating structures . . . of family, church, voluntary association, neighbourhood, and subculture." Such structures assist individuals in navigating between the impersonal "megastructures" of the public sphere (e.g., the state, large business corporations) and the "underinstitutionalized" realm

of the private sphere.[3] This mediating structure, which I shall call the "vertical" dimension of civil society, is intended to describe the mediatory function it purportedly fulfils between the state and the self.

A second way in which the idea of civility can be expressed accounts for what I call the "horizontal" dimension of civility, captured well by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman: "The main point about civility," Bauman writes, "is the ability to interact with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without pressing them to surrender it or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place."[4] Bauman describes civility in terms of the way in which individuals within society treat with respect and dignity its fellow members, regardless or perhaps precisely because of their differences, be they religious, racial, cultural, or otherwise.

Vertical civility, then, has mainly to do with the effect of social institutions to maintain social solidarity. Horizontal civility concerns the presence of the plurality of divergent groups.[5] The political and social theorist Ernest Gellner's succinct definition of civil society as "institutional and ideological pluralism"[6] covers well both the vertical and horizontal dimensions, respectively.

In what follows, I would like to argue (1) that in order to have vertical civility (i.e., civility as between the state and the self), there must be horizontal civility between members of society; (2) that Islamic conceptions of civility are compatible with both aspects of civility as discussed in non-Muslim academic literature; and (3), that if there is to be public civility, specifically between Christian and Muslim groups, there must be some agreement on the notion of "the human good."

Vertical Civility Presupposes Horizontal Civility

The early twentieth-century political philosopher Antonio Gramsci writes, "Between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion stands civil society."[7] The sociologist Martin Shaw adds to this characterization by highlighting the global expressions of civil society.[8] The philosopher and historian of ideas Charles Taylor offers this characterization in much the same vein: "We can speak of civil society wherever the ensemble of associations can significantly determine or inflect the course of state policy."[9] What is described here has mainly to do with vertical civility.

In the literature on vertical civility, an important historical question arises as to whether or not civil society includes the realm of economic activity. For Karl Marx, common economic life was the essence and end goal of civil society; consequently, "the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy."[10] For Immanuel Kant, the activity of a common economic life quite literally had a civilizing effect: "The spirit of commerce sooner or later takes hold of every people, and it cannot exist side by side with war."[11] Similarly and earlier still, the eighteenth-century political theorist Baron de Montesquieu speaks of "the gentle trade," the idea that economic activity is intimately connected with civil society. For Montesquieu, "the natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace."[12]

Chapter 13

Ethics in a Multifaith Society

Christians and Muslims in Dialogue

Patricia Madigan, OP

In 1993, Robert Muller, a former Deputy General Secretary of the United Nations, made the following address at the second meeting of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago: "Religions and spiritual traditions: the world needs you very much! You, more than anyone else, have experience, wisdom, insights and a feeling for the miracle of life, of the Earth, and of the universe. After having been pushed aside in many fields of human endeavour, you must again be the lighthouse, the guides, the prophets and messengers of the one and last mysteries of the universe and eternity. You must set up mechanisms to agree, and you must give humanity the divine or cosmic rules for our behaviour on this planet."[1]

The passing of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic at that gathering signaled for the first time that representatives of the world religions were prepared to acknowledge they had a common task to engender a readiness for dialogue and cooperation among their adherents and a common responsibility to mobilize their ethical resources toward contributing to the well-being of humanity as a whole.[2]

Few today can doubt the need for a world ethic. Both developed and developing nations are dealing with the political and social dilemmas of modernity. In coming to ethical decisions, it must be recognized that there are few if any homogeneous societies anymore, and ethical decisions increasingly involve contact between different religious and cultural systems.

It must also be acknowledged that much of the contemporary world rejects a deductive approach that focuses on sacred texts, creeds, or codes. A "strong" approach to postmodernity would suggest that consensus on ethical questions between religions is not possible among such enormously diverse groups. Yet studies such as those published by Regina Wentzel Wolfe and Christine E. Gudorf[3] suggest that, in practice, the ethical behavior of real

people across cultural and religious borders demonstrates the ability of people to make responsible, moral decisions and that great diversity neither precludes the possibility of societies reaching internal agreement on basic values and standards of behavior nor prevents real possibilities of dialogue between societies.

Such a consensus will not, however, imply a single unified global religion that will lead to the replacement of the high ethics of the individual religions with an ethical minimalism. Rather, it implies a process whereby the people of various religions, despite their many differences, seek to work out and confirm what they hold in common and embrace the need to work in partnership together toward mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation.

Although it is recognized that, by themselves, religions cannot solve all the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of the world, they can provide resources to bring about a change, or "conversion of heart," in people and the spiritual renewal needed to build a "ground of meaning" to underpin necessary reforms. Just as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights has, in the space of a few decades, brought about a changed awareness worldwide about economics and ecology, about world peace and disarmament, and about the partnership between women and men, there is growing recognition that a similar change of awareness is needed regarding the way that religions might contribute together to ethical understandings common to all humanity.

It is in this historical context—and against a background in which Christian and Muslim identities have often been constructed in the public mind as diametrically opposed to each other[4]—that we consider whether Muslims and Christians, in a cooperative spirit of dialogue, can together make a contribution to ethics in a multifaith society. Although each religion has its own integrity; its own authorities, norms, and ideals; and its own history and traditions, a cursory glance at the two traditions also points to a wealth of common ground, some yet to be fully excavated, upon which to build ethical cooperation.

Ethical Foundations of Islam and Christianity

Both Christianity and Islam are built on ethical foundations, each containing at its core an emphasis on ethical praxis and teaching. In Islam, ethics is based on religious sources, primarily the Qur'an, supported by the Hadith (traditions of Muhammad) and other elements derived from pre-Islamic tribal morality, from custom, and from Persian and Greek sources.[5] Emphasis is on conformity to the law. The Qur'an is the ultimate criterion of good and evil, having the status of the Word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632 CE). Early suras (chapters) of the Qur'an stress monotheistic belief, worship, good works, and social justice. The individual and the community alike are called to repentance. Evildoers and idolaters will be punished, while doers of good and worshippers of the One God are promised Paradise. In Islam, the Qur'an and Hadith are supported by *ijma* (the consensus of the

Chapter 14

Crosscurrents in African Christianity

Lessons for Intercultural Hermeneutics of Friendship and Participation

Stan Chu Ilo

Introduction

This essay addresses three important but related concerns in African Christianity: (1) the cross-cultural forces driving the momentum of Christian expansion in Africa; (2) how these cross-cultural forces affect interdenominational and interreligious conflicts; and (3) some concluding proposals on how an African religiocultural concept of "participation" can ground a Trinitarian theological praxis of intercultural friendship for overcoming differences among churches, people of different faiths, and the wider African society. Participation will be presented as a hermeneutic for reconceiving the basis for cross-cultural friendship and *dwelling in common* where differences and diversities are embraced not as deficits but as potential transformative factors in the culturally pluralistic societies of today.

The Challenge of Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace

At the Second African Synod in October 2009, representatives of the Church in Africa defined the mission of African Christianity and the African continent as meeting the challenges of reconciliation, justice, and peace. This theme was chosen so that African Christians and churches can explore more deeply how they can become agents of reconciliation and peace through healing the root causes of division and conflicts beginning with the Catholic Church herself

and the wider African society. The Synod made a strong call for reconciliation as the indispensable condition "for creating in Africa relationships of justice between men and for building an equitable and lasting peace in respect to every individual and every people; a peace that needs and opens up to the contribution of all persons of good will beyond the respective religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and social affiliation."[1] This call is germane for the challenges of the times in Africa. Africa offers some of the most challenging scenarios of conflicts and wars among and within nations. There are also signs that the factors that are driving the political conflicts are also significant in the nature and shape of divisions within churches and interdenominational and interfaith tension. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa offers some of the most challenging and intriguing scenarios of the semipermanent nature of some humanitarian interventions as a result of intractable conflicts and wars in the continent. The causes of humanitarian crises and conflicts in Africa are political, economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious factors. There are also increasing cases of human dislocation and migration caused by ecological and economic crises, as well as outbreaks of infectious diseases and natural disasters. Within the last two decades, the United Nations recorded 36 conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of these conflicts were along political and ethnic fault lines that produced conflicts in the past and continue to generate ongoing concerns in terms of the instability of nations and wars between African countries.

Africa also faces other challenges that have multiple impacts on African Christianity—namely, (1) the crisis of family life as a result of external influences on some traditional African values and internal factors because of poverty, rural-to-urban migration, and the collapse of the traditional bonds that held families and clans together;[2] (2) the ongoing exploitation of Africa (which goes back to the slave trade), colonialism, globalization, and new forms of internal enslavement of Africans by African leaders in both politics and religious institutions; (3) the marginalization of Africa in world politics and international financial systems; (4) and the contagions of disease, poverty, political and social instability, and religiocultural conflicts.

However, in the midst of these crises, there is a strong hope in Africa that is built on a burgeoning Christian faith. Pope Benedict captured this hope very well in a speech in Benin in 2011: "There are thus many reasons for hope and gratitude. For example, despite the great pandemics which decimate its population . . . Africa maintains its *joie de vivre*, celebrating God's gift of life by welcoming children for the increase of the family circle and the human community. I also see grounds for hope in Africa's rich intellectual, cultural and religious heritage. Africa wishes to preserve this, to deepen it and to share it with the world. By doing so, it will make an important and positive contribution."[3] In order for African Christianity to make an important contribution to World Christianity, world history and to the transformation of the African continent into a zone of peace and abundant life, I propose that social scientists, theologians, and scholars of African Christianity need to understand the cross-cultural process and forces that are shaping African Christian beliefs and practices. This is necessary in order to understand the nature and character of African Christianity on one hand and the nature of conflicts in Africa on

Chapter 15

The Challenges of Interfaith Relations in Ghana

A Case Study of Its Implications for Peace-Building in Northern Ghana

Nora Kofognotera Nonterah

Introduction

Generally, Ghanaians are very religious, and religion holds a significant stake in Ghana. The reality of religious pluralism in Ghana dates back to the coming of the colonial masters in the fifteenth century. They came with Christianity to meet the native populace, most of whom already practiced the indigenous African Traditional Religion (ATR).[1] In the eighteenth century, Islam joined the two existing religions. Since Ghanaians, like most African peoples, are deeply religious, they gladly embraced these new religions. Competing for adherents has been a common practice of some Christians and Muslims.[2] The ATR, Christianity, and Islam are the main religions practiced in Ghana. Hence it is very common to find people of different faiths coexisting within the same family or community and sharing common public or work places.[3] However, like in some other societies in the world,[4] the "misuse" and "misunderstanding" of religion has been a source of conflict in Ghana.

Ghana, though known to be a peaceful country, is confronted with violent conflicts that have marred the nation, especially its northern part. These conflicts are mostly ethnic, but sporadic religious violence has been recorded as well. Some efforts have been made by the religious bodies of Ghana in an attempt to contribute to peace-building in Northern Ghana. This is done through interreligious dialogue and through peace talks in areas where there are conflicts. This essay seeks to study the programs and activities of religious groups in Ghana toward peace-building, to appraise and underline their flaws, and make proposals that not only help improve religious relations in Ghana

but also help make religion an instrument of promoting peace in Northern Ghana.

By interreligious relations, I mean constructive interactions with people from different faith groups that involve people's readiness to be accommodating both in discussing the religious contents of different religions (dialogue) and in interacting with neighbors of *other* religions in daily living. It also includes the outcome of dialogue—the ability to live, study, and work together. By peace-building, I mean "a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships."[5] It is a process that aims at bringing together various approaches and strategies to arrive at not only the absence of war but also a more harmonious human society. The implication is that the building of relations and reconciliation are important tenets in such a process. I argue in this essay that religion has a significant role to play in this process. Reconciliation and building of relations through dialogue is important for the peaceful coexistence of different religions in a given society.

David Little and Scott Appleby describe religion as a double-edged institution that "promotes both intolerance and hatred . . . as well as tolerance of the strongest type—the willingness to live with, explore, and honour difference."[6] This suggests the degree to which religion has both destructive and constructive dimensions that influence society. This paradoxical influence of religion leads one to agree with Hans Küng that "there can be no world peace without religious peace."[7]

In my opinion, religion is essential in Northern Ghana both because some conflicts are caused by religion and because religion has a significant influence on the lives of many Ghanaians. The questions then are as follows: How can interreligious dialogue be maximized for peace-building in Northern Ghana? Can a better harnessing of the emphasis on peace by the three religions practiced in Ghana foster peace in Northern Ghana? With these questions in mind, this essay makes a modest contribution toward a more multireligious and peaceful Northern Ghana.

Religion, Conflicts, and Peace in Northern Ghana: A Brief Overview

Conflicts in Northern Ghana,[8] which are often violent and deadly, are in their origin mainly ethnic/communal. However, religious-related conflicts are equally observed in various parts of the area. In the towns of Yendi and Bawku, both in the northern part of the country, there have been longstanding interclan (intraethnic) and interethnic violent conflicts, respectively. Intraethnic conflicts are between two factions of the same ethnic group. These factions could be families, clans, or communities. They share a lot in common, like language, history, culture, and political demarcations. They live very near to each other and share borders. Interethnic conflicts involve two distinct ethnic

Chapter 16

Religion, Violence, and Public Life in the United States of America

Leo D. Lefebure

Religion and violence have intertwined in public life in the North America since at least the first European settlements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During a time of intense religious intolerance, persecution, and warfare in Europe, many of the first European settlers coming to North America brought with them the familiar conflicts, harsh judgments, and persecutions based on differences of religious belief and practice. To make matters worse, many of the European settlers also carried with them violence-prone interpretations of Christianity that would soon justify the brutal treatment of Native Americans and enslaved Africans. Given the raging religious animosities of the Old World and the age-old patterns of conquest and domination, it is not surprising that religious justifications for violence poisoned public life in North America. What is more remarkable is the development of alternative perspectives that sought to end the violent religious struggles, accept religious differences amicably, and provide freedom and equality to all the land's inhabitants.[1]

Citizens of the United States sometimes boast of the freedoms they enjoy and hold up American-style democracy, the separation of church and state, and the freedom and equality of all citizens as models of public life for the entire world. Some have even seen the United States as having a messianic mission to spread democracy to the world, using military force if necessary. However, other Americans have warned against the dangers of such a grandiose sense of the national mission. The historical record concerning religion, violence, and public life in North America from colonial times to the present is complex and conflicted. In one generation after another, there has been an uneasy tension between the acceptance of religious diversity and freedom of religion for all

on the one hand and, on the other, repeated efforts to establish "a Christian America" on the basis of Protestant faith and practice and to spread its blessings to the rest of the world. There is also a repeated tension between ideals of freedom and equality on the one hand and continuing structures of domination and oppression on the other. Religion has played a multisided and often ambiguous role in these tensions, which have yet to be resolved.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The Puritans came to New England in pursuit of religious liberty for themselves and freedom from the religious policies of the Stuart monarchy in England. They did not intend, however, to grant religious liberty to those who disagreed with them. They understood themselves to be on a divinely commanded errand in the wilderness on the model of the Israelites coming out of Egypt to a new land. They felt called to establish a city on a hill, the New Jerusalem, in what was thought to be a world of darkness. The Puritans in New England saw the Native American inhabitants as following abominable religions and lacking humanity, thus having no legal claim to the land they in which they had always lived.[2] Their strange religious practices and their supposed backward state were thought to deprive them of all rights. Remembering that the ancient Israelites were instructed to destroy other tribes lest they tempt them to worship other gods, Puritan settlers viewed Native Americans as temptations to sin and sought to exterminate them or, at least, contain them in separate areas.[3]

In 1637, when the Puritan Captain John Underhill was questioned about his army's nighttime burning of a sleeping Pequot Indian village that contained mainly women, children, and older men, he replied, "Sometimes the Scripture declareth [that] women and children must perish with their parents . . . We had sufficient light from the Word of God for our proceedings."[4] William Bradford, the Governor of Plymouth Colony, gave his approval. From this time onward, European settlers in New England were involved in repeated battles against Native Americans, often seeing themselves as the new Israelites fighting for the Promised Land against "the Heathen."[5]

For centuries, Euro-American Christians despised Native Americans because of their different religious beliefs and customs and broke one treaty after another with them, killing them or forcing them into destitution. To a large degree, Euro-American identity in North American was forged through a process of oppositional bonding with Native Americans.[6] Negative stereotypes of Native Americans buttressed an uneasy sense of Euro-American religious and cultural superiority. Puritan women who were kidnapped and discovered that they preferred life among the Native Americans to living with their own husbands sent shock waves of anxiety through the newly settled community in New England.[7] The wars against Native Americans and the myth of the frontier would have a lasting effect on American narratives and images, setting a pattern for interpreting later conflicts.[8] The dream of Euro-American Protestant Christians as a new Chosen People building a city on a

Chapter 17

A Marginal Asian Reading of Mark 7:24–30

An Interfaith Filipino Homeless Community's Encounter with the Syrophoenician Woman

Pascal D. Bazzell[1]

Introduction

Christianity today is marked by great diversity and beauty, truly a global representation of the body of Christ. To address this empirical reality, Christian theology of today needs to reflect this shift of Christianity's new social landscape in theologically presenting this beautiful splendor of the diversity of Christ's body. Whereas Christian theology has been primarily connected to the Global North (Europe and North America), these demographic changes that moved the center of Christianity to the South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) should to be reflected in today's theology.[2]

With the continuous changes of human cultures and social existence in particular, theology and contexts should be a critical dialogue partners: "It is now widely acknowledged that context always plays a key role in meaning, and that contexts are not single or uniform, but complex, and often plural."[3] From the moment that the New Testament epistles were addressed to particular persons and locations until today, Christian theology has been expressed in contextual ways. From its beginnings, theology has arisen from within specific historical contexts and has addressed the questions of those contexts.[4] "And if we take the resulting social, demographic and epistemological transformations seriously, they should be reflected in our hermeneutical, ecclesial and ecumenical dialogues, especially those dialogues that intentionally seek to nurture and incorporate a multiplicity of peripheral local theologies."[5]

This essay is such an attempt at intentional listening to the theology done at the margins. The theology discussed is regional, as it is specific to

the context of a Filipino homeless ecclesial community. The community consists of families and individuals who have been living in one particular park for several years (some for almost 20 years). This group's population spans from newborns to great grandparents (4 generations). Also, the community is multiethnic, multilingual, and multireligious (beside dominant Catholic and Protestant groups, there are also a minority of different other sects and Muslims living in the community, and many have an underlying Animistic belief system).[6] It is my intention to explore Mark 7:24–30 in order to present an example of how dialogue can take place between the insights of one particular Filipino homeless interfaith community and other voices of exegesis and theology.

For many Christians in Asia, the story of Mark 7:24–30 may resonate with their own. Various contemporary exegetical studies exhibit the richness and relevancy of this pericope. I will be reading this story from a multidimensional perspective, using a multiaxial frame of reference.[7] This will bring traditional, cross-cultural, sacramental, feminist, postcolonial, interfaith, and missiological interpretations into interaction with the interpretive aims of the homeless. I will also offer a few theological comments, which acquire their emphasis from the social location and the unique perspective of the homeless. It is this unique perspective—similar to the desperate Syrophoenician mother, an outside voice—that helps reveal the hidden potential meanings in a text that we might not see.[8] Such a contextual and interdisciplinary reading of Mark 7:24–30 enriches our understanding of the text.

The Geopolitical Context in the Syrophoenician Story

The story depicts Jesus being in "the region of Tyre." Tyre could be understood today as an autonomous city-state, whose urban population is rich and non-Jewish, in contrast to the poor and Jewish population of Galilee to which Jesus belongs.[9] Gerd Theissen's research provides a description of the cultural context between Jews and Gentiles in the border region of Tyre and Galilee. He expounds his description under six different rubrics: ethnicity, culture, social status, economics, politics, and sociopsychology. These viewpoints open new avenues toward understanding the pericope. Theissen points out the economic difference between the wealthy Tyrians and Jewish peasants represented in Mark 7:30 by noting the "bed" of the woman's daughter as a κλίνη (kline; "bed") instead of a κράβαττος (krabattos; "mattress"), which would have been used by a peasant's family.

The Syrophoenician seems more well-off than most Jews, as she has a house and a bed, which symbolize an elevated social status.[10] The poorer segment of society would be sleeping on straw bags, mats, or simple stretchers.[11] Theissen describes a typical picture of urban-rural relations, where Tyre was a wealthy city and the Galilean hinterland inhabited by Jews provided the "breadbasket" for Tyre. Usually the hinterland got the short end of things in the struggle over food.[12] As the Syrophoenician woman is one of the Gentile city dwellers, Sharon Ringe writes, "she is portrayed as part of the group in

Chapter 18

Living in a Pluralistic Reality

The Indian-Asian Experience

Roberto Catalano

An Introduction to the Main Issue

In the past decades, *pluralism* has gained a central position on many forums. In theological and, more specifically, in ecclesiological contexts, it has been a main issue, involving a more positive attitude toward other religions and cultures. At the same time, pluralism has also lead to the appearance of fears, tensions, and misunderstandings. In light of my own experience, I would like to offer a few points for reflection and further constructive debates. For more than half of my life, I lived in daily contact with a pluralistic society. Although I was born in Italy, at that time still a typical monocultural and monoreligious society, I also lived in India for almost three decades and traveled extensively to other parts of Asia. This experience gave me the opportunity to encounter a multifaceted, multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious society, or societies, to be more precise. I personally realize how enriching it is to be exposed to a wide spectrum of *otherness* and *diversities* to the point that I perceive and share, in all its depth, Leonard Boff's perspective when he underlines that the tendency to make an absolute of one's own comprehension of reality may lead to an impoverishment.

Faced with today's ever growing, worldwide pluralistic reality, we realize how prophetic Wilfred Cantwell Smith was in 1962 when he stated that "the religious life of mankind from now on, if it is to be lived at all, will be lived in a context of religious pluralism."[1] The same perspective resounds, surprisingly to many perhaps, in the conviction of a young Joseph Ratzinger who, at the beginning of the 1970s, affirmed that in dialoguing with the other religions, the very sense of the possibility of our faith is at stake.[2] Half a century later, pluralism is a major issue, encouraging a more positive attitude toward other religions and cultures but also witnessing an open debate involving the

mission of the Church to announce Christ to the world, the mediation of Christ, and again, the role of the Church in the context of salvation. Moreover, we cannot ignore the crucial issue of identity, which for many appears to be in danger in a pluralist context and in engaging in dialogue with those who have a different culture and belief. In this respect, Cardinal Kasper's statement may be truly significant: "Dialoguing with others offers us the possibility of understanding more in depth our own faith and our own practice of faith."[3]

The Whole World Is Becoming Plural

For a long time, pluralism has been considered as a characteristic of contexts far from Europe and the Western world in general. Unfortunately, in many environments, this perception holds firm even today. Undoubtedly, in Asia, pluralism has been a focal problem, as significantly expressed by Peter Phan, who considers "the question of religious pluralism a matter of life and death . . . the future of Asia Christianity hangs in balance depending on how religious pluralism is understood and lived out."[4]

Nevertheless, we have to be cautious not to reduce this issue and confine it to certain corners of the world. It is not the Asian context alone that needs to address pluralism. The West too is in need of it, and the universal Church cannot be deprived of it. Christianity, in Europe and worldwide, has to accept the consequences of the end of colonialism, which for centuries was a powerful conveyor of an imposed evangelization. Thanks to the sudden resurgence of religion, starting from the 1980s, and because of the more recent migratory waves, religion has resulted, in Levinas's words, in the "*irruption of the other*."[5] In Europe, Christianity is once again just one religion among the others, whereas in the rest of the world, Christianity is progressively losing its hegemony and has to compete for survival on the open market of all religions and ideologies. We can very well say that there are no longer oceans separating Christians from other religions.[6]

For Christianity and for the Western world, it became a matter of survival to turn urgently toward contexts that, being traditionally pluralistic, may have something to suggest. On one hand, as described by Edward Schillebeeckx, Western Christianity continues to experience that the apparently unshakable certainty of possessing the truth, while all the others are wrong, is no longer a possibility.[7] On the other hand, as pointed out by Claude Geffré, religious pluralism is becoming the horizon of twenty-first-century theology, just as atheism had been for twentieth-century theology.[8] In this apparent contradiction probably lies the root for all apprehension, misunderstanding, and tensions. The process is not at all simple and painless.

The Indian and Asian Contribution

Theologians and bishops of Asia, making use of a dialogical approach, could responsibly accept various religions and cultures of the continent "as significant and positive elements of the economy of God's design for salvation" and therefore keep in high esteem and respect their "profound spiritual and