Dialogue in Diversity

Christians in Conversation with a Multi-faith World

by Robert H. Munson

Acknowledgements

We commonly learn by teaching. I have long been interested in Interreligious Dialogue (IRD) but had not delved into it as much as I wanted. So when our Academic Dean asked if I could teach an elective, I responded positively suggesting "Dialogue with Asian Religions." Thankfully, he said Yes, Each year I keep adjusting the format and content. Some years I focus more on Dialogue and some more on Asian Religions. Over time, I have seen that the best results seem to come from encouraging my students to talk more and listen more to those of other faiths. This book and a textbook that provides an overview of Asian major religions helps to gain basic principles, but the real learning is (1) outside of the classroom practicing dialogue, and (2) inside the classroom discussing what happened outside. I suppose this is my way of saying that I believe this book is useful, but won't be particularly useful without actual practice, and group process afterwards.

I would like to thank two students in particular here at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary and Asia Baptist Graduation Theological Seminary. They are Brang and Pinky. Both of them did research as part of their theses on dialogue with Buddhists and Muslims, respectively. One of these theses I used directly in this book, and the other I used indirectly in terms of the research. They were both a big help.

My wife, Celia, has been supportive of my odd desire to type and type and type. She has also helped as a sounding board for a number of aspects of this book... including convincing me to change the title of this book. She was right.

I am convinced that communication is a gift of God. "The Word" served as God's initial act in Creation, and God's ultimate act or redemption. Ultimately, all wisdom emanates from God so to the extent that this little work expresses wisdom, God is deserving of gratitude and praise.

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Introduction

Imagine that you have a toolbox. Maybe you are a carpenter, but in your toolbox you have only one tool — perhaps a hammer. Can you build a house only with a hammer? Poorly at best. Can you hammer screws? Again poorly. Other tasks are likely even worse — leveling, sawing, drilling, and more.. The carpenter would be exhausted and the constructed house would be a disaster.

A wise carpenter has three things:

- What. A toolbox with a variety of tools associated with his craft

- How. Skills to use each of the tools effectively

- Which/When. Wisdom to know the right tool to use for each task

Now imagine that each Christian has a toolbox of skills associated with serving God. Some tools may be spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, witnessing, and meditation. Other tools may be less specifically religious such as teaching, polemics, argument, encouragement, and counseling. Having a wide variety of skills/disciplines is important, but this is not enough.

One must know how to use each tool well. A carpenter may own a power saw, but still need considerable training to use it expertly. A minister may "know how to preach," but still there is a great distance between this and preaching well or effectively.

Skillful use is not enough. One must have the wisdom to know the right tool to use in each specific circumstance. Some people are very skilled in prayer, but as important as prayer can be, there are times when prayer is the wrong tool… or at least an inadequate tool. A hungry neighbor needs something in addition to prayer. There are times when

preaching is needed, and times when it is inappropriate or unhelpful.

This book is about a tool — dialogue. Specifically, it is about the tool of dialogue, and how it can be used effectively as a Christian minister in interacting with people of other faiths.

At a basic level, most everyone knows how to do dialogue. But this does not mean that everyone is equally competent to dialogue well. This also does not mean that everyone knows when to use it and when not.

This book is primarily aimed at missionaries and ministers who work in cross-cultural or religiously pluralistic settings. However, the places on earth that are monocultural or religiously monolithic are decreasing rapidly. Therefore, there are fewer and fewer ministers who can say that they are competent in their ministry without skills in interreligious dialogue.

Philosophically, this book sees interreligious dialogue as seeking understanding. This is in contrast to those who see it primarily in terms of either focusing on similarities ("common ground" or relativizing approach) or on differences (apologetic approach). As such it is consistent with Evangelicals, who take very seriously their own truth convictions regarding religious faith. However, it also challenges the presumption of many Evangelicals that the most effective way to interact with people of other faiths is through preaching, teaching, or arguing.

Sadly, a book is by its nature a form of one-way communication. Since this book is about dialogue, it is my hope that readers will have an opportunity to go through this book with others — and especially with others of a variety of viewpoints. Dialogue, as a tool, is practiced, not simply read about; and is made sharp through practice with those of diverse opinions.

Chapter 1

What is Interreligious Dialogue?

Dialogue

Dialogue is defined as "conversation between two or more persons... an exchange of ideas and opinions."[1]

The wording of the definition implies a couple of things:
- It is a 2-way conversation in which information flows in both directions.
- The purpose of the two conversing is so that both parties gain understanding of the ideas and opinions of the other.

While there are many forms of communication, four basic categories are shown in Figure 1.

This figure shows four quadrants. The y-axis divides conversation as to whether it is primarily one-way (uni-directional) or two-way (bi-directional or multi-directional). The x-axis divides communication in terms of purpose --- whether it is primarily to seek change or seek understanding.

Preaching is generally thought of as uni-directional. One speaker talking, normally, to a group of people. While there may be feedback from the audience, typically, the communication is not very interactive. Normally in preaching, the one assuming the role of preacher is seeking to change the minds of the members of the audience. Such change may be in terms of thought, attitude, or behavior. Preaching that is not focused on change tends to move, stylistically, into the next category.

Type of Communication

	One-way	Two-way
Seek Change	Polemics Preaching	Apologetics Argument
Seek Under-Standing	Lecture Teaching	Dialogue Discussion

Figure 1. Forms of Communication

Teaching is also generally thought of as uni-directional, especially as it pertains to the classic teaching form of lecturing. In lecture, the goal is most often to promote understanding. Communication occurs to impart knowledge more than to seek change. That is not to say that all teaching is uni-directional. Additionally, some teaching is done to encourage change. However, the more focused the lecturing is on changing minds, the more the teaching is often seen as "preachy." The characteristics of the communication tends to move into a different quadrant as the method or aims change.

Argument is bi-directional (or multi-directional) with the goal of changing the mind of the other(s). In essence, there is a goal of "winning," and it is quite likely that the other(s) has a similar goal.

Dialogue then is bi-directional, or multi-directional, with no specific goal to change the other's mind. The goal in this case is mutual understanding.

In reality, communication is not this simple. Conversation tends to change. Suppose two people have coffee together. The two may have elements of all four quadrants. They may have simple dialogue, and then get into an argument. They may periods of time where one explains something to the other that sounds more like teaching than dialogue and other places where one gets "preachy." In a college class, the professor may have aspects of all four types in his "lecture." This should hardly be strange. One may think of them as four tools in conversation, and they are used as is appropriate in the moment.

Functions of Dialogue

Communication may have several purposes or functions. According to Roman Jacobson, there are 6 general functions of communication:
- Referential. Language about things or "stuff"
- Expressive. Language speaking about feelings/emotions
- Phatic. Language that socially connects or supports belongingness
- Conative. Communication that involves direct guidance, like a command.
- Poetic. Language for its own sake.
- Meta-lingual. Communication about language[2]

Of these, dialogue, as the term is used in this book, is tied to at least three of these functions. Dialogue is Referential because it addresses ideas, opinions, and facts. Dialogue is also Expressive in that it deals with feelings, emotions, and values. Finally, dialogue may also have a Phatic role. This is because dialogue has a social function --- bringing people together. Since, dialogue (again, as the term is used in this book) seeks to communicate thoughts and ideas, it is generally not Conative (directive). Likewise, dialogue is not typically Poetic--- at least not in the sense that it is 'language for its own sake.' For similar reasons, dialogue would not typically be Meta-lingual, unless the dialogue is actually a discussion about how language functions.

Taking Jacobson's first three functions of Communication, one can suggest three functions of dialogue. These will serve as a functional description of dialogue, and will serve as the foundation for understanding interreligious dialogue.

Dialogue serves to:

- **Understand each other better.** (Referential)
- **Have greater insight of the other.** (Expressive)
- **Reduce social distance.** (Phatic)

Dialogue and Barriers

Since IRD specifically seeks dialogue with those of other faiths, this means that it involves dialogue between those with considerable differences in perspectives and values. Hesselgrave describes seven areas of difference that are likely to exist that serve as barriers to effective communication. These barriers are:

- Worldviews (How we perceive the world)
- Cognitive Processes (How we think)
- Linguistic Forms (How we express ideas)
- Behavioral Forms (How we act)
- Social Structures (How we interact)
- Media Influences (How we channel the message)
- Motivational Resources (How we decide)[3]

These seven areas describe seven barriers to effective communication. However, these barriers cannot be broken down prior to communication, generally speaking. For the most part, the barriers to communication must be broken down through communication.

Through interaction, we learn more than simply what others believe. We also learn what others do NOT believe. In so doing, we are removing misunderstandings that can be impediments in ministry. Additionally, we begin to get a glimpse of how they make decisions, what they value, and how they interpret experiences. As these things are better understood, the cultural distance diminishes. That is not to say that the cultural distance disappears. There will always be barriers to effective communication.

Reducing social or cultural distance is especially valuable to Christian ministry. Preaching and teaching commonly do not reduce social distance. In fact, the arrangement of one person sharing information to a others with minimal feedback reinforces a social hierarchy and

distance. It also often removes much of the feedback loop that comes with conversation.

With regards to argument, the structure supports equality of the participants, and yet argument may actually increase distance. This is due to a phenomenon known as the **"backfire effect,"** or **"pushback."** [4]

"Pushback" is caused when two people committed to different perspectives seek to change the view of the other participant in the conversation. As the conversation/argument progresses, person "A" makes a point in support of his own viewpoint. Person "B," however, is probably not weighing the merit of the point of "A." Rather, "B" is either seeking to determine how to undermine the strength of the point, or is not really listening to the point at all but crafting his own point to throw back at "A." The result is shown in Figure 2. Two people start out arguing points but by the end of the argument are often further apart in their beliefs than when they started, and may also have greater animosity for one another then they had at the beginning. This is not universal, thankfully, but is common.

Before

After

Figure 2. Pushback

Before

After
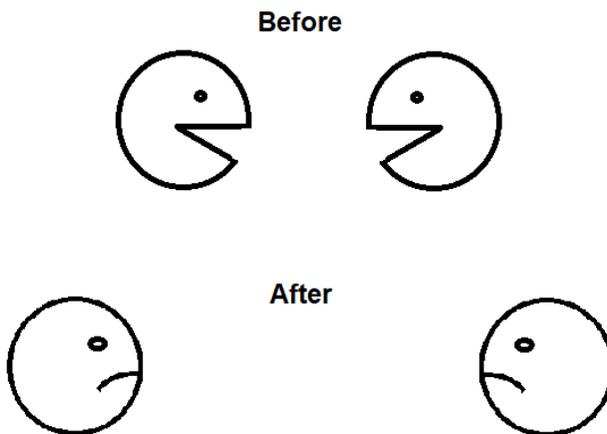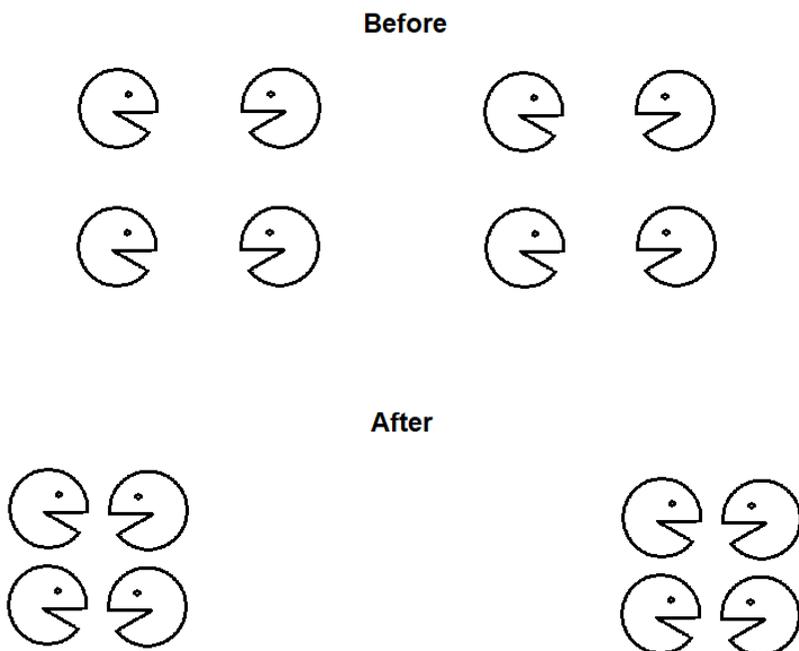
Figure 3. Cultural Separation

One might think that a way to avoid this problem of pushback is to have people only communicate with others they agree with. This, however, doesn't really solve the problem.   Consider two groups of four members each. Each group only converses within the group and minimizes communication outside. Figure 3 shows what can happen.

Figure 3 shows two groups that start out having a certain amount of cultural distance. However, as time goes on, due to lack of communication with other perspectives, each member of the group becomes more similar to each other, and unique and extreme in their sub-cultural beliefs and values compared to other groups. Also due to lack of good understanding of the views of other groups, there is commonly stereotyping of others. Such **stereotyping** tends to demean other groups, and even when it doesn't, still distorts others' beliefs.

Related to this is **confirmation bias**. We tend to find evidence that

supports our beliefs more convincing than evidence that contradicts our beliefs. As an example, imagine that you believe that you have 127 pesos in you pocket. Now suppose you count the change in your pocket and come up with 124 pesos. There is a pretty good chance that you will double check your pockets and count again, because you are pretty sure you counted wrong. Suppose this time, you come up with 127 pesos. Chances are you will stop. Why? Because getting the number you expected to get is pretty convincing. On the other hand, getting a number that is different than expected is not nearly as convincing. You will likely need multiple attempts to count change before being convinced that the number you anticipated was incorrect.

This will show up in arguments as well. Suppose Peter, James, and John are involved in an argument. Peter holds to Opinion A, while James and John hold to Opinion B. James is listening while Peter and John argue. James finds Peter's arguments to be quite weak, while John's arguments appear to be very well-grounded. Is that actually the case? Perhaps, but probably not. It is likely that John's arguments seem stronger because James shares Opinion B with him. Because of this, John's arguments resonate with James much more than the opinions of Peter?

But What is a Religion?

Some prefer to speak of "Interreligious Dialogue" while others prefer the term "Interfaith Dialogue." This book uses religion over faith, but that should not be taken to mean that the term is superior over the other. More on this in the next section. For now, let's consider what defines a religion.

Religion is very difficult to define. One of the most well-known is one provided by Anthropologist Clifford Geertz: For him, Religion is *"a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the mood and motivations seem uniquely realistic."*[5] Geertz's definition focuses on a perspective of religion that draws from cultural anthropology. William James, an early psychologist takes a much more individualistic, and psychoemotional, definition: *"the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to*

whatever they may consider the divine."[6] Other definitions may utilize terms such as "numinous," "transcendent," or "holy" to ensure that religion is not confused with other similar concepts. Wayne Oates in his book, "The Psychology of Religion" has a chapter on the definition of the term 'religion.' In the end, Oates gives no single definition, but looks at the term from different perspectives or dimensions such as ethical, psychological, and social.[7] Often in the end, a religion is 'something that looks, sounds, and feels like a religion."

For some, a defining feature of religion is its structures. Thus, religion is understood in its having rituals, sacred buildings, dogma and religious texts, and professional practitioners. When Charles Darwin visited Patagonia (southern end of South America) in the 19th century, he discovered a people there who, in his own mind, were completely non-religious. However, that was because he took a structuralist view of religion. Religiosity permeated the people's lives but did not show itself in the traditional structures that Darwin was used to.[8]

Religion can also be looked at from a functionalist perspective. The term religion has roots in Latin where it refers to binding together. It could be looked at as a system that binds us to each other in common belief, and to a common behavior through ethical guidelines. Further, religion can be said to provide answers to what are sometimes described as the great existential questions of life, questions of ultimate meaning. These include:

- Where did we come from?
- Why am I here?
- What is my purpose?
- Does life have any meaning?
- How should I live my life?
- Does anything truly matter?
- What happens after we die?

Of course, this view would then include many groups that would not describe themselves as religious. Marxists and Naturalists (referring to those who reject anything "supernatural," not to people who enjoy the outdoors) do give answers to these questions. To avoid so many groups being seen as religions (even if not "organized religions") some prefer to add additional limiters. This is why many seek to add the belief in "the divine" or transcendence to the understanding of religion

to keep secularist groups outside of a type of religion. Similarly, others may emphasize that which is numinous, or involving a connection with spiritual and spiritual experiences as required for religions.

Religion has taken on a bad name in many circles (thus the growth of those who are "spiritual but not religious." But even among religious people it has often been looked down on. This writer recalls sitting in an adult Sunday School class where the teaching pastor stated that religion almost always has a negative sense in the Bible. (It may be more accurate to say that the Bible and religion have a "complicated relationship.) Many Christians like to give the statement that "Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship." Speaking to an imam a few years ago, he said that "Islam is not a religion, it is an ideology." With respect to both, it is safe to say that Christianity is BOTH a religion and a relationship, and Islam is both a religion and an ideology.

Interfaith Dialogue versus Interreligious Dialogue

Because of the difficulty to define the term "religion," it is hardly surprising that some prefer to use the term "faith." Utilizing "Faith," as a term, has the advantage of vagueness--- even more vague than the term "religion." Many groups have religious aspects while rejecting the label "religion." On the other hand, many of those same groups would reject the term "faith" as well. Perhaps the term "faith" would work best for describing individuals who have a personalized religious sense that doesn't really mesh with other organized religious.

Negatively, the vagueness of the term "faith" can obscure the situation for many people. A majority of people on earth do not simply have a "faith," they are involved in a religion the binds them together as a people of faith, and binds them to rituals, rules, and structures that are, often, millennia old. The term "faith" has broadness, but lacks that level of depth.

Ultimately, however, one can use whatever term one wishes. Understand, however, that Interfaith Dialogue and Interreligious Dialogue still involves intentionality to bridge a gap for conversation. It is more common today to use the term Interfaith Dialogue over Interreligious Dialogue. This book uses the second term, but it is really your choice.

Discussion:

1. How might dialogue (conversation of equals where the focus is on understanding rather than changing the other's mind) minimize pushback?

2. Some speak of four types of Interreligious Dialogue.[9] These are:

   - Dialogue of Life (interacting in normal activities of life with those of other faiths)
   - Dialogue of Social Action (working together with those of other faiths in activities common interest (such as areas of social justice of common human needs).
   - Dialogue of Theological Exchange. (learning about each other's beliefs, practices, and values through communication)
   - Dialogue of Religious Experience (joining together in common religious ritual or activity... such as praying together.)

   This book focuses mostly on the third one (theological exchange).

   But to what extent might one say that they other three are also forms of dialogue?

   Are there benefits (or risks) in the other three?

Chapter 2

Interreligious Interaction in the Old Testament

The Christian and Jewish faiths have had numerous ways in addressing differences with other faiths, and with each other. Rarely does the interaction fit the understanding of IRD (Interreligious Dialogue) expressed in this book. Regardless, there is still value in looking at examples and seeing if there are principles that could be applied to IRD.

The relationship between Israel as people of Yahweh with people of other faiths varies considerably in the Old Testament. This chapter does not seek to consider this topic thoroughly. Some books, such as Mission of God by Christopher J.H. Wright[1] discusses many forms of engagement between followers of Yahweh/Christ and those of other faiths. However, a few here are considered, listed from the most confrontational to the least confrontational.

Violent and Offensive. Read or review the book of Joshua. This involves the invasion of Canaan by the Israelites. It is violent and aggressive. In fact, Israel was supposed to wipe out the Canaanites (treat as "corban"). technically, this action by the Israelites was not really because the Canaanites were of a different religion. Genesis 15:16 suggests that it was partly as a response to their sinfulness. That sinfulness was not essentially due to their religion, because religiously, they were not worshipers of Jehovah during the time of Abraham either. Here, Israel is seen to act as a tool of God to carry out His role as judge. This sense is similar to the role of the Babylonians as a tool of judgment used by God to chasten Judah. In Joshua, a practical goal of this activity was to remove the local peoples to give the land to the Israelites as an inheritance.

Many Christians struggle to reconcile their understanding of the Great Commission, and loving one's enemies with this chapter in Israel's history. Ultimately, our guide is Jesus Christ, not Joshua. Still, if there is one God who "does not change," how do we address this violence in terms of being a Christian? Sorry, but there will be no serious attempt to answer that question in this book. That is for a different book by a different author. For now, deal with it as an area of healthy struggle. However, three things need to be remembered:

- A review of the descriptions of God in the Old Testament rejects the stereotype that the "OT God" was wrathful, and the "NT God" was loving. In fact, there are more descriptions of God as loving and merciful in the Old Testament than in the New.
- Christ is our model for behavior. Our own interpretation of the Old Testament should never be utilized to undermine the example and teachings of Jesus.
- Violence between believers and unbelievers was never taught as normative in the Old Testament. In fact there was a range of relationships described in the Old Testament (as will be shown in the remainder of this chapter).

Another example of Violent and Offensive behavior comes from the Intertestamental Period when Jews destroyed the Temple of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim. This behavior seems unjustifiable on any level. Even from a pragmatic standpoint, it did not stop the Samaritans from worshiping there, but it did fuel the hostility that was still intense during the time of Christ. *(Note how members of a Samaritan village in Luke 9 did not welcome Jesus and His disciples because they were heading to Jerusalem, and how James and John sought the blessing of the Lord to call down fire to destroy that village. Jesus rebuked them for this attitude.)*

Violent and Defensive. A classic example of this is in the book of Judges. Other nations are attacking the Israelite confederacy. In response to this, a judge (religious and civil leader) is raised up who leads the people of Israel to drive out or destroy the enemy. These activities were primarily tied to sovereignty rather than religion. However, it is hard to separate the two. Traditionally, the wars of nations were seen as wars between the gods. Therefore, the success of one nation over another was seen as superiority of one god over another.

Cycles of wars does not give the full picture of the times of the Judges. Read the book of Ruth. Its story occurs in the years of the judges. It shows a much more positive interaction between Israel and the nations around it.

Power Encounter. Less bloody than actual war, normally, is power encounter. The most aggressive, and best known examples were the conflicts between Moses and Pharaoh (Exodus 5-12) and Elijah and the priests of Baal (I Kings 18). In these circumstances, there was only modest communication attempted towards mutual understanding. Rather the goal was to determine who is right and who is wrong for Elijah, and the change the heart and mind of Pharaoh for Moses. In both of these cases, the result was death. However, death wasn't the necessary result. And in fact, in both stories, there were those who were not faithful to God who were motivated in the encounter to be faithful. In both of these stories the results were somewhat ambivalent. In the case of Moses the Israelites were allowed to leave, but at a great cost. In the case of Elijah, the people praised God that day, but there is little evidence that this led to prolonged revival.

Syncretism. In much of the history of Israel, worship of Yahweh coexisted with the worship of other gods. Sometimes reading the words of prophets against the kings and people of Israel and Judah, one may be tempted to think that the people had completely left behind their worship of Yahweh. However, typically, the behavior was more of adulteration rather than replacement. People worshiped Yahweh plus other gods. The result is a form of syncretism. They may worship Yahweh as their national god, the protector of their people, but then worship other gods for fertility, health, or other aspects of life. The prophets of God made it clear that such behavior was unfaithfulness to Yahweh. Nevertheless, syncretism is a common result of interaction between different faiths until now.

Laissez-faire. In some cases, there was something akin to a peaceful coexistence with those who worshiped other gods, while maintaining purity of faith. Perhaps the best example of this was in the exile. In Esther, Nehemiah, and Daniel one finds the Jewish faithful living among pagans peacefully while maintaining seeking to faithfully live out

their Faith. There were conflicts between the Babylonian and Persian pagans and the Jews, but this appeared to be more the exception than the rule. In this peaceful coexistence, the Jews did not necessarily directly challenge their pagan neighbors. Still, it could be argued that such interaction had an impact on pagan neighbors. The God-fearers of the New Testament, and the Samaritans of the Old Testament may be viewed as a response to this low-pressure interaction.

Prophetic. Israelite Prophets normally preached to their own people. In some cases, an oracle was given to another nation. However, often it is not clear whether the message was actually sent to the other nation or whether it was given for the benefit of the Jewish people. Perhaps the most well-known case of an Israelite prophet speaking prophetically to pagans was Jonah speaking to the Phoenician sailors and later to the Ninevites. Jonah appeared to have modest concern for the sailors, but little to none for the Ninevites. However, the story as it is told makes it clear that God is a universal God with concern for all peoples. In Isaiah 36 one finds the messenger of King Sennacherib preaching to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in a reversal of positions. The book of Isaiah, especially, emphasizes that God is a god of all peoples, not just the Israelites. While the Israelites rarely acted on this prophetic vision, it did set the stage for more serious outreach in the New Testament.

Hospitable. Sometimes the relationship with those of other faiths was more congenial.

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 19:33-36

Such foreigners would almost invariably be people of other faiths... at least initially.

Analysis

The Old Testament gives the story of the history of Israel, and God's work through them. It is easy to see history through "one set of glasses." But any such perspective can misinform.

Israel and its history as found in the Old Testament exists between two critical events. One of these events is the calling of Abraham and the other is the Incarnation of Jesus. Genesis 12:1-3 emphasizes that God's intention to bless Abraham and Abraham's descendants so that they would serve as a channel of that blessing for all peoples. The ministry of Jesus is also expressed in a similar fashion leading up to the establishment of the church and the commissioning of the apostles. This writer believes that one should struggle with how Israel interacted with other nations. At the same time, The Abrahamic Covenant and the Great Commandment (and Great Commission) must be understood as God's ultimate expression of His attitude regarding all peoples.

Discussion

1. Read II Kings 5 on the story of Naaman the leper. What forms of conversation were used and forms or interaction. What lessons can be learned from the story?

2. Read I Kings 10:1-13 and II Chronicles 9:1-13. What was the types of interactions between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Was their anything of importance gained for this visit?

Chapter 3

Religious Interaction in the Early Church Era

"Peter and Cornelius describes a win-win in interfaith conversation. Cornelius left his former faith and became a Christian. However, Peter also learned a great deal from Cornelius. Being an Apostle of Christ did not mean that he had nothing to learn from a syncretistic pagan. One could even argue that Peter was, in a sense converted. He now knew that the Gospel of Christ is revealed and available to Gentiles."[1] -Norman Anderson

Rather than describe types of interactions, a few cases of interaction will be here presented. The first one technically predates the church era, but does set a clear example for Christians since it comes from Jesus.

Jesus and the non-Jews. It has been argued by some that Jesus' self-understanding was that He saw His ministry as exclusively to the Jews. While that may be a discussion for a different book, it is certainly noteworthy that He intentionally did ministry in Gentile regions, and the Gospel writers singled out several specific occasions where Jesus had fruitful interactions with Gentiles or Samaritans. The largest ministry to Gentiles we know of is Jesus' feeding of the 4000 (as opposed to the 5000 that was a primarily Jewish audience).

Gadarene demoniac	Matthew 8:28-34
10 lepers (1 Samaritan)	Luke 17:12-19
Samaritan woman (at well)	John 4:5-42
Centurion	Matthew 8 1-12
Group of Greeks	John 12:23
Syro-Phoenician Woman	Matthew 15:21-28
Feeding of the 4000	Matthew 15:29-39

More could be added. Perhaps it could be said that Jesus gave priority to the Jews. However, the term "priority" most likely would be seen in the same manner as it would be used regarding the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. For Paul and Barnabas, Gentiles were seen as equally needing the Gospel of Christ, but the Jews were given "temporal priority" in the sense that they went to the synagogues first in a town before going to the Gentiles. In this same sense, it could be said that Jesus gave priority to the Jews by sharing His message with them first.

From a standpoint of interreligious dialogue, the two most relevant episodes may be the Samaritan woman at the well, and the Syro-Phoencian woman. In terms of religious dialogue, one could also include the conversation with Nicodemus. Although Nicodemus was technically not of a different religion, the conversation very much has the flavor of an interreligious (or interfaith) dialogue.

Harvie Cox has given some guidelines for Interreligious dialogue based on how Jesus spoke and behaved (including his conversation in John 3 and 4, and others such as with the Syro-Phoenician woman, the Gadarene demoniac, and others).

- Jesus shifts discussion from theory to practice. For example, speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus did not let the conversation get trapped in a discussion of the differences of worship between the Samaritans and Jews.

- Jesus reminds us that there is ambivalence in religion. Jesus, after all, was fiercely opposed by many (not all) of the religious people of his day. Jesus could be described as a religious teacher or even a religious leader, but He was not focused on being religious, but being transformed.

- Jesus' set the example of one who had the wisdom in knowing when to be judgmental, and when to refrain from judgment. Although Jesus could be quite critical regarding religious leaders of His time, He was often scandalously non-judgmental about people who would commonly be labeled as sinners.

- Jesus was prepared and perhaps even expectant of finding God at work in others--- even in others with strange beliefs or practices. Jesus on more than one occasion marveled at the

faith of people who would probably be described as unbelievers. However, it may be more truthful that he wanted others (such as His disciples) to marvel at and learn from this.[2]

Peter and Cornelius. While in the case of Jesus and the Samaritan woman where Jesus initiated the conversation, Cornelius initiated the meeting. Peter answered the questions that Cornelius had, and his answers led to Cornelius and his family responding to the message of Christ.

Cornelius, as a God-fearer, was a Gentile who embraced some aspects of the Jewish faith, Often, the individuals most open to the Christian faith were those who were in some ways bi-cultural... such as God-fearers. Similarly, often the Christians most prepared to share their faith to other peoples were those who were bi-cultural, such as Hellenistic Jews. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter indicates, good dialogue can also give opportunity for God to teach a Christian via a non-Christian.

Paul at Ephesus. Paul had numerous encounters with pagans. One of those times is found in Acts 19 where he and his group spoke in Ephesus. We don't really know what he told them, but in verse 26 it is noted that they made it clear that "man-made gods are no gods at all." However, the clerk of Ephesus noted that they neither robbed anyone nor blasphemed their god (Artemis).

Paul appears to attempt a careful balance. Challenge their beliefs while not insulting their beliefs. Clearly though, some were offended and angry. It may not always be possible to tell the truth without offending someone.

Paul in Athens. This passage again shows Paul walking a fine line between maintaining his prophetic role (expressing the truth from God) while still being respectful of the listeners. Analysis of this alone could be a book or at least a chapter. But a few quick observations would suffice for now:

- His conversations in the market were lively enough and presented in such a way to interest some of the philosophers of

Athens, such that they invited him so they could hear more. (One might call this an early example of "permission-based evangelism.")

- Although the passage said that he was personally grieved at all of the idols in Athens, his statement at the Areopagus was different --- true, but still diplomatic. Instead of complaining, he simply noted their religiosity.
- He noted similarities of his own Jewish/Christian belief in one universal God and the beliefs of many of the group (commonly these philosophers did not share the common people's belief in the myths of many gods). He even used Greek poets to support such a belief.
- He utilized a local legend of Epeminides and the Unknown God as a further link between Jewish Monotheism and Athenian religious belief.
- Even though he identified similarities, he also drew their attention to a clear difference, the resurrection of Christ.

Paul focused his attention neither on only similarities nor on only differences. He dealt with both.

Power Encounter in the Early Church. Respect was not always used in the interactions between Christians and non-Christians in the early centuries of the church age. Celsus, a pagan philosopher, states that some 2nd century Christians would practice aggressive blasphemy against pagan gods.

> Silly as they are, one finds them standing next to a statue of Zeus or Apollo or some other god, and shouting, 'See here: I blaspheme it and strike it, but it is powerless against me for I am a Christian!' Does this fellow not see that I might do the same without fear of reprisal to an image of his god? And further, those who do stand next to your little god are hardly secure! You are banished from land and sea, bound and punished for your devotion to [your Christian demon] and taken away to be crucified. Where then is your God's vengeance on his persecutors? Protection indeed![3]

What Celsus was saying was that to the pagans, the actions of pagans proved nothing more than showing their ignorance. A similar issue occurred later with St. Boniface who was known for destroying pagan shrines as a show of the power of God over the local deities. This message was muted by his own death at the hands of pagans years later, and destruction of Christian buildings by Vikings in the following centuries.[4]

The Apologists. Some hostility was created largely through a certain mutual disrespect between Christians and pagans, but some was also due to lack of communication. This was, perhaps, unavoidable. Christianity was an outlawed religion for the first three centuries of its existence within the Roman Empire. It survived, in a sense, as a secret society. As is true of most secret societies, even today, wild tales circulate as to their "real nature and activities." Combating this were the Apologists. These were early church fathers who sought to express their Christian beliefs to non-Christians-- particularly political leaders. Such expression was typically not in the form of dialogue. To have dialogue with Roman political leaders often could only occur when on trial. Paul and Polycarp, among others, had such opportunities, although it is not clear as to their effectiveness.

The apologists used their writings to defend the faith, partly, but also to clear up misunderstandings. Athenogoras, in the late 2nd century, wrote "A Plea for the Christians." Among other things he sought to dispel confusion that Christians were cannibalistic, atheistic, and incestuous. Each of these wild accusations probably came from a bad misinterpretation of an aspect of Christian behavior. Christians practiced the Eucharist where believers symbolically ate the body and blood of Christ through bread and wine. This could lead to beliefs that they were cannibals. Christians also did not participate in worship directed to pagan idols, or participate in temple worship. This could lead to the charge of atheism (without a god). Their practice of calling each other "brother" and "sister" including husbands and wives could lead to thoughts that they practiced incest. Of course, tied to this was the fact that Christianity was illegal and practiced in secret. This very fact could lead people to assume that they "must be doing something wrong." Otherwise, why would it be illegal? Athenogoras' goal was not so much to convert Roman leaders, but to break down barriers due to misunderstanding. Perhaps then public policy could change.[5]

Social Ministry of the Early Church. Words are important, but it is true that actions speak louder than words. During some of the early plagues. A couple of major plagues from Roman history were the Cyprian and Antonine plagues. Christians undermined the rumors against them via loving action. Bishop Cyprian of Carthage instructed his members,

> *If we only do good to those who do good to us, what do we more than the heathens and publicans? If we are the children of God, who makes His sun to shine upon good and bad, and sends rain on the just and the unjust, let us prove it by our acts, by blessing those who curse us, and doing good to those who persecute us.*[6]

Eusebius of Antioch noted that in a different plague, a plague in Armenia during the reign of Maximin*, brought those around to note the care given by Christians.*

"...so that their deeds were on everyone's lips, and they glorified the God of the Christians. Such actions convinced them that they alone were pious and truly reverent to God."[7]

Ultimately, this two-pronged strategy appeared to work. Words were used to challenge misunderstandings about Christianity. Added to this was actions that forced others to rethink their opinion of Christians. One might rightly wonder if words alone or actions alone would have been enough.

Christian Interaction in the Islamic World

A very interesting early church document was about the Patriarch Timothy. He lived under Muslim rule, and was invited by the Caliph to three days of discussion on faith. The document is interesting partly because it has an even-handed quality to it. Both are shown as having depth of knowledge and passion for their own perspective faiths. Less even-handed was the tone of speech since one was a ruler and one was a member of the ruled. Appendix A includes a section of the document. In it, Timothy offers the parable of the lost pearl. Timothy notes that both he and the Caliph have a faith that each is convinced is the one true one, much like two people who have found a stone in the dark that each is convinced is a valued pearl. One cannot know the

truth of who is correct until the day of judgment. Timothy, however, was neither expressing a denial of truth, nor an inability to judge truth claims. He noted, for example, that the miracles associated with Christ and the Christian faith, supports (but still without proof) the truth claims of Christianity.[8]

The Crusades were a different form of interaction. It was militaristic and violent. Centuries later many Muslims will still bring up with anger the Crusader invasion of the Holy Land. Christians could make the counter-argument (with historical justification) that Muslims actually started the pattern of violence. However, blood feuds are never solved by pointing fingers at each other over who started it. Actually, the Crusades (they were not called "the Crusades" until centuries later) was a policy of the Western Church to relate to other religious groups violently. Such groups included Muslims, Jews, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Albigensian Christians (and other Christian groups deemed heretical), and Pagans. In contrast to this was St. Francis who traveled to speak to the Egypt to speak to the sultan during this time period. He was treated with courtesy.[9]

It is hard to say to what effect Patriarch Timothy or St. Francis had. We might be tempted to say that they had little impact. And yet, Christians were commonly treated better in Islamic regions than Muslims were in Christian regions during the Middle Ages. An interesting quote from the secretary of the Muslim ruler, Emperor Akbar, of the Moghul Empire in the late 16th century shows an interesting effect that such communication appeared to have on him:

> O God, in every temple I see people who are seeking you,
> And in every language I hear, people are praising you.
> Polytheism and Islam grope for you.
> Every religion says, You are one, without equal.
> In every mosque people murmur their holy prayer
> And in the Christian Church they ring the bell out of love for you
> Sometimes I visit a Christian monastery
> And sometimes I visit the mosque,
> But it is you I seek, from temple to temple
> Your elect have nothing to do with heresy or orthodoxy
> For neither of the two stand behind the shelter of your truth.[10]

The quote expresses both the possibility and potential problem associated in interaction and communication between different

religions. Here, the person has adapted to a pluralistic viewpoint where truth claims of different faiths are ignored and the desire for God is given priority. For Evangelical Christians, this sort of pluralism or even syncretism would be problematic. On the other hand, it does express a harmony here between Muslim, Christian, and Hindu (and perhaps Jainist, Zoroastrian and others) that is all too rare. For us today, perhaps this suggests the potential of healthy interreligious dialogue, but also its potential dangers. More on this will be discussed later.

Discussion

1. Go online and read the entire document "***The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi.***". (See Footnote 8 of this chapter for one website online that this can be found.)

   What are some of the characteristics of this conversation?

   What were some of the Caliph's concerns about Christianity as he understood it? How did Timothy respond to these concerns?

2. Read John Chapter 4 regarding Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman.

   What attitude did he take in speaking to her?

   Was there a strategy to the conversation? If so, what?

CHAPTER 4

DIALOGUE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh Scotland was a great ecumenical activity understanding the Christian call to the world. However, 1910 still had many of the characteristics of the 19th century. The Church, especially the Protestant church, was largely American and European. This was still the age of Colonialism. There was still an optimism of Christendom-- the idea that the church was transforming the world and bringing in the Kingdom of God. World War I led to some questions in these areas, and these questions grew in World War II, and even more so in the Nuclear Age.

The seeds of the change are especially evident for Missions in the 1920s and 1930s. During this time there was disillusionment with "Christendom," and Christian missions as a (Western) civilizing influence. Also W. E. Hocking's influence and his work in developing the "American Report of the Commission of Appraisal of the Laymen's Foreign Mission Enquiry," promoting a pluralistic agenda away from evangelism and conversion, had an influence.[1] Despite this, the dominant views of missions stayed in many ways in line with missions of the 19th and early 20th centuries. And this continued into the early 1960s.

The 1928 International Missionary Council held in Jerusalem expressed the spirit of the 20th century well in "The Christian Message." It maintained a strong evangelistic and missional spirit while addressing honestly the challenges of that century. The following is from this document:

> Throughout the world there is a sense of insecurity and instability. Ancient religions are undergoing modification, and in some regions dissolution, as scientific and commercial development alter the current of men's thought. Institutions regarded with age-long veneration are discarded and called in question, well-established

standards of moral conduct are brought under criticism; and countries called Christian feel the stress as truly as peoples of Asia and Africa. On all sides doubt is expressed whether there is any absolute truth or goodness. A new relativism struggles to enthrone itself in human thought.

Along with this is found the existence of worldwide suffering and pain, which expresses itself partly in a despair of all higher values, partly in a tragically earnest quest of a new basis for life and thought, in the birth pangs of rising nationalism, in the ever keener consciousness of race- and class-oppression.

Amid widespread indifference and immersion of material concerns we also find everywhere, now in noble forms and now in license or extravagance, a great yearning, especially among the youth of the world, for the full and untrammeled expression of personality, for spiritual leadership and authority, for reality in religion, for social justice, for human brotherhood, for international peace.

In this world, bewildered and groping for its way, Jesus Christ has drawn to Himself the attention and admiration of mankind as never before. He stands before men as plainly greater than Western civilization, greater than the Christianity that the world has come to know. Many who have not hitherto been won to His Church yet find in Him their hero and their ideal. Within His Church there is a widespread desire for unity centered in His Person.[2]

The 3rd World Missionary Conference, 1938 in Madras, India, saw the focus of missions toward acknowledging the need for dialogue with those of other religions. This dialogue was focused considerably on the demonstration of Christianity as the "Ultimate Truth."

Dialogue was driven additionally by migration and communication. The 20th century saw great strides in travel--- automobile, train, boat, and airplane. Additionally, communication media made all parts of the world more open for seeing and hearing the rest of the world. It is easy to ignore those that cannot be seen or heard. But with the 20th century, people of many faiths and cultures were not only accessible for communication, but now could be living as neighbors. The importance of dialogue between peoples of different religions was not simply, then, a new method of missions, but was a natural and necessary response to sociological and technological changes.

Some of the changes showing themselves in the early part of the century began to grow during the 1960s. However, many of the changes were not particularly obvious as that decade started. At the 1961

gathering of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, the purpose of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism was

> *"to further the proclamation to the whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the end that all men may believe in Him and be saved."*[3]

This view was in line with the mission perspective of previous decades. It is true that Evangelism at this time was often seen in terms of a partnership of proclamation and social ministry, but that hardly was out of line with the practice of missions through the "Great Century" and before.

Dialogue was recognized in the early part of the 1960s as an important part of dealing with other religions. However, it was understood in a manner quite different than the relativistic form that was popularized years later:

> *"True dialogue with a man of another faith requires a concern both for the Gospel and for the other man. Without the first, dialogue becomes a pleasant conversation. Without the second it becomes irrelevant, unconvincing, or arrogant. Whatever the circumstances may be, our intention for every human dialogue should be to be involved in the dialogue of God with men, and to move our partner and oneself to listen to what God in Christ reveals to us, and to answer him."*[4]

However, as the decade advanced, changes continued. There was a growth of seeing Mission in terms of "Christian Presence" which called for behavior that appeared to be every bit as vague as the term sounds. With "The Church for Others" published by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1967, things had radically changed. Missions did not really involve a call to repentance. Proselytism is seen as "the opposite" of missions. Conversion is not seen so much as individual and personal, but more corporate in form. That is not to say there were no good points in the work… but rather that mission theology had radically changed… and much of those changes undermined the historical purposes of doing mission work.[5]

"Presence" became a word that was used as a substitute for "witness,"

"mission," and "evangelism." Charles de *Foucauld* described a missionary as

> '*a person who is in the place with a presence willed and determined* as a witness to the love of God in Christ.'[6]

This definition is not so much wrong or bad, but so vague that it could entail doing almost anything or nothing. Panikkar during this same period, saw missionaries not so much as bringing Christ to other cultures, but helping other cultures "discover Christ" in their culture through the missionary's service to the people.[7]

Why would there be such a radical change during this time? I really don't know. However, the IMC, International Missionary Council, formally joined the World Council of Churches in 1961. Perhaps the IMC, a thoroughly missions-oriented organization, provided a strong influence on the WCC gatherings in 1961 and 1963… but that influence waned later in the decade, being then driven more by churches that had a different perspective and agenda.

The 1960s also saw the growth of Conservative Evangelical Missions with competing gatherings of their own in the 1960s at Wheaton and Berlin. Sadly, some of the missions theology with the Evangelicals was little better than that of the WCC, especially in the early years of the decade. In Wheaton there was a strong push to narrow missions. Missions was so narrowly defined by some as to reject education and social ministry. Some like members of Donald MacGavran's Church Growth Movement, sought to view missions as only entailing churchplanting, and separating between discipling (a missionary role) and perfecting (something almost the same as discipling, but not viewed a missionary role).[8]

The 1960s in the separation of missions between the conciliar (World Council of Churches) and conservative missions showed itself in dialogue. The conservative missions tended to take a more traditional understanding of dialogue that was more focused on evangelism. Conciliar missions went more towards a view of dialogue that is consistent with the missions theology that avoids proselytizing.

There were some, like John Stott, Lesslie Newbigin, and Max Warren, who managed to be relevant/influential with both sides. Warren and John Hick had debates (dialogue) as to the nature of dialogue.[9]

In 1979, the World Council of Churches came up with guidelines for interreligious dialogue. It sought to find a balance between witnessing and listening, between faith conviction and openness to other faiths. A part of these guidelines notes this:

> *It is Christian faith in the Triune God Creator of all humankind, Redeemer in Jesus Christ, revealing and renewing Spirit which calls us Christians to human relationship with our many neighbors. Such relationship includes dialogue: witnessing to our deepest convictions and listening to those of our neighbors It is Christian faith which sets us free to be open to the faiths of others, to risk, to trust and to be vulnerable. In dialogue, conviction and openness are held in balance.*[10]

This "two-way street" of conversation where there is a presumption that God may reveal Himself through the other's faith tradition, and not just one's own, is typical from the conciliar side of missions and ministry. For example the Baar Statement In section V of this statement,

> *We need to respect their religious convictions, different as these may be from our own, and to admire the things which God has accomplished and continues to accomplish in them through the Spirit. Interreligious dialogue is therefore a "two-way street". Christians must enter into it in a spirit of openness, prepared to receive from others, while on their part, they give witness of their own faith. Authentic dialogue opens both partners to a deeper conversion to the God who speaks to each through the other. Through the witness of others, we Christians can truly discover facets of the divine mystery which we have not yet seen or responded to. The practice of dialogue will then result in the deepening of our own life of faith. We believe that walking together with people of other living faiths will bring us to a fuller understanding and experience of truth.*[11]

The 20th century ended with groups that promote a more positive view of other religions and the possibility of learning from other faiths as

equals, groups that are more exclusivist and proselytizing, and groups that struggle to take Christian faith conviction seriously, while still being open to listening to other faiths (and their adherents) seriously. In the next chapter, we will attempt to look at some of these categories of groups as well as related models for viewing IRD.

Discussion

1. In the 1960s the united missions conferences that started in 1910 were broken as Evangelical Protestant Christians began holding separate conferences, that eventually became known as the Lausanne Movement. This separation was generally along theological lines where a missional theology more in line with the Liberal tradition followed one group (known eventually as "conciliar missions") while more Conservative Evangelical or Pentecostal/Charismatic theologies followed the other group. Do you believe that this break up was good for missions and the church, or bad (or both)?

2. After the break-up, a number of missiologists, John Stott, Lesslie Newbigin, and Max Warren are good examples, intentionally maintained strong ties to both groups. In a sense, they worked to maintain "interreligious dialogue" between the conciliar and evangelical/conservative missions groups. An argument could be made that they had a role in bringing conciliar missions back from some of the pluralistic excesses of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Additionally, they may be credited in convincing Evangelical Missions that social ministry is valid and necessary Christian missions along with proclamation of the Gospel. Others may disagree on this. Do you believe that there is a need for conversations between denominations and traditions within Christianity today? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 5

Models Of IRD

Views of Salvation

There are many views regarding Interreligious dialogue. Not only are there many views, there are many labels and many classifications for IRD. In this book, we will use a spectrum based on the people's understanding with regard to the prime function of dialogue. Figure 5 shows the range that is loosely divided into three general approaches. However, before we get to that, we can start with a different, but very much related, spectrum--- perspectives on salvation. This is based generally on Alan Race's three basic groups: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism.[1] These three groups are pretty well agreed upon. Two more groups are added in Figure 4-- Particularism and Universalism. Some people use the terms Particularist and Exclusivist interchangeably. Here, they will each have a different emphasis.

Particularist   Exlusivist   Inclusivist   Pluralist   Universalist
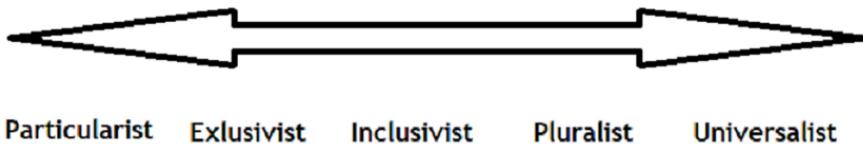
Figure 4. Salvation Spectrum

An Exclusivist for a Christian means that only those who are Christian, embracing Jesus as their Savior will be saved. The term Particularist is often used to describe a narrower version of Exclusivist. Such a person may believe that salvation is mediated through their own faith group or denomination. As such, one is saved by Jesus, but it is only available

to those within their own specific sect, or those who embrace a certain unique doctrine, or have participated in a special denominational ritual.

At the other extreme, on the far right are the Universalists. Universalists believe that God immediately or ultimately saves everyone. Jesus' salvation is available to all, and effective for all.

In between the Exclusivists and the Universalists are two groups that overlap somewhat. These are the Inclusivists and the Pluralists. An Inclusivist would typically say something like, "Jesus is the means to salvation, but there may be some people who are saved by Jesus who do not necessarily know Jesus." Some may believe that Jews can be saved through the faithfulness to the Mosaic Law even if they reject Jesus. Others may say that Muslims can be saved by Christ even though they reject His role as Savior and Lord because they worship the same God (God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Even those who would normally describe themselves as Exclusivist, may have some Inclusivist views. For example they may believe that infants who die are saved by Jesus even though they don't know Him. Or they may see the same with those who are too mentally disabled to understand the Gospel message and respond to it. Others may go further and say that those who have never heard the message of Christ may still be saved by Christ based on their response to the truth that they know.

Pluralists take this progression further. Some may say that Jesus is still Savior, but that pretty much anyone can be saved if they express Christlike love in their hearts regardless of their religion. Some continue further and take Jesus out of the picture and simply say that 'There are many roads to Heaven." For these Pluralists, along with Universalists, may consider themselves to be Christian, but would reject the uniqueness of Christianity.

Evangelicals traditionally are considered to be Exclusivists, although most would have believe at least a limited form of Inclusivism. However, the truth is that one can come across self-described Evangelicals (to say nothing of other Christians) who fit into all of the above categories.

Knowing where one fits into the above categories can be useful because the views regarding IRD correlate often with these categories. Looking at Figure 5, the spectrum is divided into three general approaches. Again, the key is not so much the fact that there are

categories, but that it is on a spectrum. There is a wide range of views on dialogue that fit on to different places of this spectrum.

Apologetic Approach/Strategy. In this view, the purpose of IRD is to convert those of other faiths to one's own faith. Therefore, argument is the most valid form of conversation. Typically, people who like this approach emphasize the differences and deemphasize similarities. This is because the goal is to correct the wrong beliefs of the other. Christians who are more Particularist or Exclusivist in terms of salvation often gravitate to this approach. This may also be described as the "confessional approach." On the positive side, it could be said this method "gets to the point," and "calls it like it sees it." It is unapologetic in its faith commitment. On the other had, perhaps it can be a blurred view. To emphasize differences may also mean ignoring valuable similarities so one is actually seeing a distorted version of the other religion. Such a distorted view of the religion may hamper attempts influence the other person. Additionally, the method of argument, can lead to pushback or backfire as discussed in an earlier chapter.

Emphasizing Differences	Exploring both Similarities and Differences	Emphasizing Similarities ("Common Ground")

APOLOGETIC APPROACHES	CLARIFICATION APPROACHES	RELATIVISTIC APPROACHES

Commonly preferred by Particularist and Exclusivist Groups	Commonly preferred by Pluralist and Universalist Groups
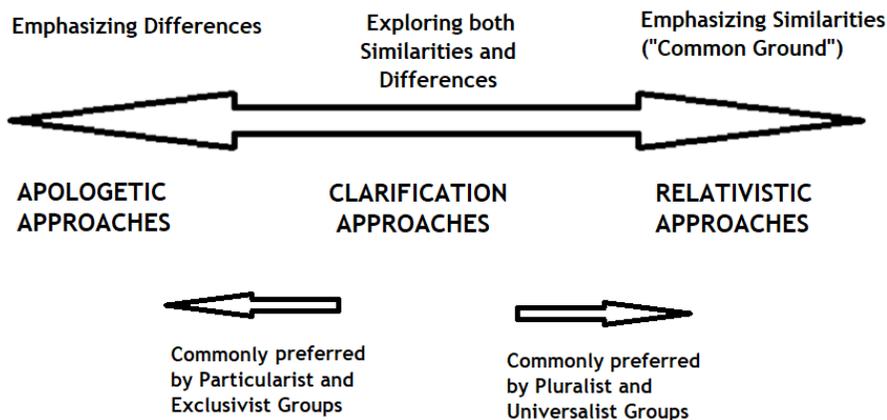
Figure 5. Dialogue Approaches/Strategies

Relativistic Approach/Strategy.   Another name for this is the "Common-Ground Approach." This view, at one extreme of the spectrum, seeks to be truth-seeking, as described by John Hick, rather than confessional when one approaches IRD. That is, one brackets

one's own beliefs or even tosses them aside so that one is better prepared to learn from those of other faiths. This approach tends to emphasize the similarities with other faiths. Those who are more Pluralistic or Universalistic Christians tend to find this approach to make more sense.[2]

Martin Buber has questioned that Hick's view that this is actually "truth seeking." He noted that if dialogue is seen as a quest for truth-seeking, why should it be presumed that a person who relativizes truth is more committed to truth than one who does not. Buber argues that what is needed in good interreligious dialogue is not relativization of truth, but mutual respect.[3]

Karkkainaen quotes Moltmann in expressing a similar idea to Buber, that truth-seeking does not imply relativization of beliefs.

> "Dialogue has to be about the question of truth, even if no agreement about the truth can be reached. For consensus is not the goal of the dialogue. ...If two people say the same thing, one of them is superfluous. In the interfaith dialogue which has to do with what is of vital and absolute concern to men and women—with the things in which they place the whole trust of their hearts—the way is already part of the goal." Moltmann rightly says that only those people are capable of dialogue—"merit dialogue," as he puts it—who "have arrived at a firm standpoint in their own religion, and who enter into dialogue with the resulting self-confidence." Thus, Moltmann continues, "it is only if we are at home in our own religion that we shall be able to encounter the religion of someone else. The person who falls victim to the relativism of the multicultural society may be capable of dialogue, but that person does not merit dialogue."[4]

Clarification Approach/Strategy. With this approach, one does not embrace confession/argument, but also does not relativize one's beliefs either. In this approach, the focus is on mutual understanding. One may anticipate that if one extreme (Exclusivists and Particularists) gravitate toward Apologetic Approaches, and the other extreme (Pluralists and Universalists) gravitate toward Relativistic Approaches, then Clarification Approaches should be most attractive to Inclusivists. To some extent this is true. However, other groups can tend toward

some form of Clarification Approach as well. Exclusivists, for example, often like the Clarification Approach.

Why is this? Exclusivists are often Evangelistic, meaning that they seek to share their faith with others with hopes that the others will convert to their own faith. However, not all agree as to how best this is done. Most would presumably agree that relativizing one's beliefs would not be conducive to conversion. However, there is not so much unanimity as to whether argument (or straight up proclamation) or seeking understanding is more effective. Seeking understanding does tend to reduce misunderstanding and such a reduction is likely to reduce barriers to conversion.

"Poles" of Interreligious Dialogue

Harvie Cox has noted that interreligious dialogue must address two elements that exist between two different religions or faiths. These are the universalistic elements and the particularistic elements. Religions address universal human concerns and questions. Not only do they address common concerns, often they come up with many common answers. That being said, there are considerable differences between various religions. Ignoring these differences does a disservice to both religions.[5]

This author recalls having a long discussion with a member of the Baha'i faith. It was interesting in many ways, but was also rather frustrating. The individual would like to say that all religions in essence agree with each other-- that all religions give the same answers. He would say that, and I would point out distinct differences between what his religion taught and my religion... to say nothing of the differences between other faiths. He would acknowledge the differences and then say that "No," all religions agree. This conversation occurred over several weeks over 25 years ago. Perhaps today I would be able to follow the dance of words and concepts better. But it felt like he was embracing universalism to the point of self-contradiction. It all felt rather disrespecting. He honored one pole (universalistic pole) while dishonoring the other (particularistic pole). While I suppose he was seeking to give me comfort that "we all really agree," I felt like my faith and beliefs were being disrespected.

Our differences were ignored, and feelings matter.

Meaningful and respectful dialogue must address and honor both the particularistic and universalistic elements of the two religions. When comparing this to the three models before:

Focusing on the particularistic elements or "pole" emphasizes the differences, and leads to a dialogue of argument. It disrespects the commonality of humanity that leads to common themes of religious inquiry and answers.

Focusing on the universalistic elements or "pole" emphasizes the commonalities and leads to a dialogue of relativization. It disrespects the unique foci and answers of different faiths.

Centering on either pole is disrespectful of the faiths and participants in one manner or another. However, one can embrace "creative tension" where the commonalities provide context to the particularities, and the particularities provide nuances to the commonalities. A clarification form of dialogue seeks understanding by not deemphasizing either pole. It respects the participants and the religions without underplaying or overplaying differences.

But Why Do Dialogue Anyway?

Perhaps it is a bit late to bring this up, but perhaps now that the major perspectives of dialogue have been presented, it is a good time to consider why one may choose to participate in IRD, particularly from a Clarification Approach perspective. This is not a complete list. But here is a start.

First, some familiarity of other faiths helps to identify the nature of that faith. Distant observation and second-hand information does not inform, it tends to misinform and confuse. Many religions utilize similar terms but with very different meanings. Some religions utilize very different terms but with very similar meanings. Both of these are difficult to recognize without practice and conversation.

Second, knowing other religions helps one to understand one's own faith better. We learn to a great extent through comparison and contrast. For example, when Jesus shared, in the Sermon on the Mount, how the Kingdom of God "operates," He did it by providing a

series of contrasts to how the world tends to operate. Perhaps Jesus could have explained it without contrasts. He could have said that the Kingdom of God is loving, kind, forgiving, content, worshipful, and so forth. It would be quite easy to read all of that and feel pretty good about being part of the Kingdom of God. But by utilizing contrast, we discover how far we truly are from God's ideal.

Third, knowing other religions helps one gain a sense of what are key differences and what are not. Key differences between Christianity and other religions are commonly in areas of Christology (the nature and work of Christ) and Soteriology (what is the nature and process of salvation). But some things that we might think are key characteristics of Christianity are also shared by most other faiths. Consider the Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control). While these may be qualities that can be identified in a growing Christian, most of these qualities are also promoted by other religions. They may evidence a growing Christian, but they may not identify Christian dogma versus non-Christian dogma. This, in fact, should hardly be surprising since Paul notes that against these, there is no law--- in other words most everyone thinks these are good, or at least not bad.

Fourth, through contrast with other religions we can gain a clearer understanding of the broadness of our faith. Often when our understanding of religion is limited to our own faith, we end up majoring on minor issues. By learning about other faiths, one may understand that variety within valid expressions of Christianity.

Recently there was Twitter post circulating that stated to the effect that after 100 years of mission work only 12% of the Philippines is Christian. There are some obvious problems with these stats:

- Christianity and Christian missions arrived in the Philippines nearly 500 years ago, not 100 years ago.
- Over 90% of Filipinos describe themselves as Christians.

So how could he come up with the statistics shared? There are several assumptions made to arrive at these statistics:

- Roman Catholic Christianity is absolutely classed as non-Christian,
- Real Christian missions only started with the arrival of Protestant missionaries to the Philippines close to 1900 AD.

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- 0% of Roman Catholics in the Philippines are Real Christians

- 100% of Protestants in the Philippines are Real Christians

Every one of those assumptions is highly suspect, but this is not the forum to discuss this. What is important is that these assumptions are the assumptions made through non-interaction. Christianity is understood only in terms of Protestantism. Thus Protestants are Christians and other traditions of Christianity are non-Christian. But is this true?

By knowing other religions better, we can also understand that we as Christians often share far more in common than we hold different. This is not to say that differences don't matter, but at least be open to what Brian McLaren describes as a "Generous Orthodoxy."[6]

Discussion

1. Where do you fit on the spectrum of Figure 4? Where do you think people you know in your church or faith community fit? Does this have a bearing on your view of dialogue?

2. Which do you feel would be most effective for talking about one's faith with another person? Does it depend on the situation? Why?

Chapter 6

Relativism, Syncretism, and Doubt

When someone is honestly 55% right, that's very good and there's no wrangling. And if someone is 60% right, it's wonderful, it's great luck, and let him thank God. But what's to be said about 75% right? Wise people say this is suspicious. Well, and what about 100% right? Whoever says he's 100% right is a fanatic, a thug, and the worst kind of rascal. --- quoted by Czeslaw Mirosz[1]

Relativism

One of the approaches listed in the previous chapter is described as relativistic. Although this book does not recommend this approach, it is worth understanding the position better.

Relativism, at its core, rejects a universal standard. Thus things cannot be judged to a universally agreed upon standard, but only in relationship to other things. If we say that a town was built at an elevation of 300 meters, that means above a universally accepted standard --- 300 meters AMSL (above mean sea level). The standard applies anywhere. On the other hand, if one says that a town was built 300 meters above the nearby valley, this is a relative height and has no real meaning except relative to that specific valley.

However, in dialogue, one is not concerned with relative height or relative temperature or other such measures. Camps describes three somewhat overlapping categories of relativism that directly relate to dialogue. These are Cultural Relativism, Epistemological Relativism, and Teleological Relativism.[2]

Cultural Relativism is the belief that one cannot judge a culture. Since religion is an intimate part of most cultures, that means that for a cultural relativist each religion is right for the culture it is in. After, to say that a religion is wrong within a culture is to judge the culture.

Epistemological Relativism is the belief that absolute truth is unknowable. An epistemological relativist may say "I have found 'truths' that seem right to me in my context. I cannot, however, say that my truth is true for anyone else." All truth is relative so one cannot judge the rightness or wrongness (or the truthfulness or falseness) of a statement.

Teleological Relativism is that whatever works is okay. In the context of religion, this can be viewed as "all roads lead to heaven." Another way of looking at it is that no religion has uniqueness. All (or perhaps most) can lead one to salvation. This is the belief system associated with pluralism.

All three of these forms of relativism can be seen as characteristics of post-modernist thought. Post-modernist thought doubts the ability to judge, and to know absolute truth. This is not to say that post-modernism necessarily rejects absolute truth. While some may believe that, many others may accept the existence of ultimate truth, but doubt its knowability. As Merold Westphal describes post-modernism, one cannot "peek over God's shoulder."[3] If, then, truth is not knowable, and religions cannot be be judged, it is hardly surprising to assume that no religion has exclusive hold on truth or salvation.

So is relativism bad? Certainly from an Evangelical Christian standpoint it is. Christianity makes claims, and sometimes exclusivistic-sounding claims, regarding truth and salvation. Christianity may not claim to one culture over another, but it does challenge cultures and call for transformation to fulfill the culture. However, even for others, there are problems with relativism. The removal of absolutes leads to the potential of extreme subjectivism.

Peter Berger has suggested that relativism in its logical conclusion leads to cynicism-- a toxic doubting. Berger is not suggesting that all doubt is bad--- far from it. Rather, he sees as problematic where doubt dominates all thought. And such cynicism can crush dialogue. If all truth is relative, all judgments and all methods to arrive at truth are suspect. Dialogue would then devolve into sharing personal opinions

and through the process of sharing, people may choose to take someone else's idea because it is aesthetically pleasing or not.[4]

To say that the perspective of an abuser is less valid then the perspective of the abused, is to embrace a standard--- an ethical, not just a subjective or aesthetic standard. If one sees all people should share that same opinion, then one is embracing the notion that a standard is not personal, but has a universal quality to it. It is actually out of these convictions of universal truths that beneficial dialogue can come.

Syncretism

Syncretism is the combining or reconciling of different belief systems. From a Christian perspective, syncretism is the merging of Christianity with another belief system so that the result is an inadequate expression of the Christian faith (an probably an inadequate expression of the other belief system as well).

Relativism can lead to syncretism. Cultural relativism can result in syncretism. According to Paul Hiebert, one type of contextualization (contextualization of the Christian faith to a new culture) is uncritical contextualization. This is where the process of adapting the Christian message to a new culture is done with theological carelessness so that the result is something that is sub-Biblical, or an inappropriate mixing of belief systems.[5]

Epistemological relativism can also lead to syncretism. If certainty is removed from truth or belief, and one seeks, rather, to discover a "truth" that "seems valid to me," doctrines will be mixed and matched to suit the individual.

Teleological relativism may also lead to syncretism. If "all roads lead to heaven" or "all religions basically say the same thing," then one will tend to mix the different paths to make one that seems to work best for the individual.[6]

This is not to say that syncretism only comes from relativism. Paul Hiebert spoke of uncritical contextualization as resulting in syncretism, but so can non-contextualization. Non-contextualization is where the Christian faith is brought by missionaries from Culture A to Culture B

but no accommodation or contextualization is given for the new context, "B." In this case the Christian faith is presented as valid only as it exists within culture A. This is a form of contextualization as well, since the values of culture A are merged with the Christian faith such that the two are presented as one belief system.[7]

Additionally, syncretism can be done intentionally, such as by a person in a culture who takes on a prophetic role to create a new faith, drawing from more than one tradition. This may be seen in cultural revitalization movements. An example of this might be the Longhouse Religion (Gai'wiio) , described in a later chapter as well as Appendix B. One theory as to the formation of this religion was that a man named Handsome Lake sought to revitalize the Seneca nation by mixing aspects of Christianity with traditional Seneca beliefs and practices. One could also theorize that Santeria and Voodoo are conscious attempts to mix traditional West African Religion with Catholicism, or that Sikhism was an intentional mixing of Islam and Hinduism.

Is syncretism bad? Based on the definition being used here, for a Christian, syncretism is always bad. However, there is no clear demarcation between (good) contextualization and (bad) syncretism. Good people may disagree as to whether the Christian faith was effectively contextualized into a new culture, or whether the result is a sub-Biblical syncretism of beliefs. Such confusion should hardly be surprising. The early church struggled with the issue of determining what level of contextualization of the (traditionally Jewish) Christian faith to the Greek context is good and what level is unhealthy.
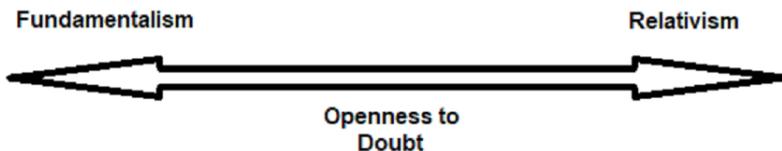

Figure 6. Doubt Spectrum

Doubt

Doubt, like so many of the other concepts in this book, can be viewed in terms of a spectrum. Peter Berger describes one end of a spectrum on doubt as Relativism and Fundamentalism at the other. As noted earlier Berger sees Relativism in a way that one could describe as doubt turned toxic. Yet he feels that toxic doubt actually eradicates doubt. To say that one rejects universals, one is embracing a <u>lack</u> of doubt. At the other end of the spectrum is Fundamentalism. Originally, Fundamentalism in Christian circles meant that one held onto certain core doctrines, while maintaining an openness to diverse opinions on "non-essential doctrines." However, over time the meaning of the terms has tended to change. Today, it is most likely used for a religious or ideological perspective that, sometimes in an almost knee-jerk manner, any challenge or openness to diverse opinion.[8]

If one considers what Berger is saying, the two extremes regarding doubt, Relativism and Fundamentalism actually share much in common. Each embraces a surety in their own belief in something, even if that something is doubt. As such, one could think of the spectrum more as a RING rather than a line. For Berger, on one side of the ring would be unhealthy attitudes about doubt (Extreme Relativistic or Fundamentalist attitudes) and the other side is healthy openness to doubt.

Doubt, according to Berger again, is healthy and necessary. We learn through doubt. The process of not knowing something to knowing something involves going through a process of uncertainty and ultimately embracing something as true. The role of doubt is even more important when going from a place of believing something that is wrong to believing something that is right. This could be described as **methodological doubt.** Rene Descartes suggests that to learn one must utilize doubt, or more commonly bracketing one's belief, so that one can discover the truth unhampered by presuppositions.

Another type of doubt that is worth considering is what one could call reasonable doubt. In many judicial courts around the world, a group of jurors are supposed to determine guilt or innocence. The goal is not to PROVE guilt or innocence but determine whether the evidence supports "guilty beyond reasonable doubt." **Reasonable doubt**

presumes that proof is beyond reach. Rather there is "converging probabilities" that lead one to feel quite certain that the truth has been determined. It has not been proven but has been found compelling. John Henry Newman describes this as the "illiative sense."[9]

What types of doubt might be described as reasonable? Well, pretty much anything that relates to our limitations as human beings. Among them include:

- Physical limitations in time, space, and experiences
- Our inability to read others' minds or sense their motives
- Our complete inability to see even one second into the future
- Our limitation in terms of knowledge and wisdom
- Our limitation in analyzing and reasoning reliably
- Our incapacity to know God as He truly is

If one takes all of these into account, one realizes that it is quite reasonable to have a fair amount of doubt.

Doubt does not mean lack of faith. In fact, Hebrews 12:1 states that faith involves confidence of our hopes and assurances of what we can't see. In other words faith is choosing to embrace what cannot be proven to be true. Technically speaking, doubt is the starting point for faith.

That being said, if doubt can lead to faith, it can also lead in the opposite direction. In this case, Jesus appears to be illustrative. Jesus, in His teachings, supported a strong belief in the reliability of Hebrew Scripture. He also showed strong faith in the God of Abraham and His goodness. And yet, many of His teachings challenged the traditional interpretation of Scripture and Law. The Sermon on the Mount showed belief in the Mosaic Law, but cast considerable doubt on the way the Law was commonly interpreted by people. There were things that were non-negotiable, rejecting relativization, and things that were very much open to doubt, rejecting Fundamentalism (as the term is commonly used today and by Berger).

Implications for Dialogue

Looking at Figures 5 and 6, there is a strong correspondence. A

relativistic mindset often corresponds to a relativistic approach to dialogue. A "fundamentalist" (using Berger's terminology) mindset often corresponds to an apologetic approach. Following that then a clarification approach to dialogue would correspond to a view that is open to doubt. In other words, for clarification, one needs to have clear and even passionate beliefs in certain non-negotiables, but be open to learning in terms of others.

Berger, again, gives several suggestions on how one can maintain an attitude of openness to doubt that does not drift into the extremes. Some of these are quite applicable to guidelines for IRD. Modifying the suggestions for IRD gives the following:

- Differentiate between core and non-core components. Know that some matters are non-negotiable or fundamental to one's belief, but other things are not. Some things are justifiably open to doubt and one should be ready to reconsider and learn.
- Consciously reject the extremes. If one does not want to be a "fundamentalist," one should not then go to the opposite extreme and relativize all one's beliefs. If one does not want to be a relativist, the answer is NOT to close one's mind off to all new ideas.
- Accept the idea that doubt is healthy for the church. It has a positive role in life and growth of its members.
- Avoid categorizing those of a different viewpoint as "the enemy." Frankly, no two people have exactly the same viewpoint. We can disagree, even disagree passionately, without being enemies, or treating each other as enemies.
- Promote occasions and institutions where peaceful dialogue can take place. Sitting at a table together, we can throw around ideas. From a distance we can hardly throw anything around except rocks.
- Accept the (strange) concept that existence of people who disagree with us is a good thing. Our freedom to choose, to believe or not believe, is precious. The only way on earth that we would have unanimity of thought or belief would be through coercion.[10]

Dialogue

1. When does doubt drift from being healthy to being unhealthy? Are there clear ways to know when that change occurs?

2. How open is your church to having people express unpopular beliefs in Bible study or Sunday School? How about if people express doubt about the goodness of God, or even the existence of God? Would such people find your church a welcoming place?

Chapter 7

Respect, Mutuality, and Listening

**We believe that through discussion and respectful dialogue,
this will turn people who have bad feelings about
others into possible friends. People are
the enemies of that which
they do not know.
-Dawud Walid**[1]

I had a friend of a different religion who was very evangelistic in that faith. We had many conversations, and he had given me materials from his religion that were meant to convince me that his faith is the one true one. Our talks were interesting, but unfruitful if judged in terms of conversion.

One day he said to me, "You know, you are pretty smart for a Christian."

I responded by saying, "That''s pretty insulting."

"What do you mean?" He really did not know. He felt that he had given me a compliment.

"Well, suppose I said to you, 'You know, you are pretty smart for a Brazilian." (His home country is Brazil.)

"Ah, okay. I see your point."

Respect

Perhaps the most universally accepted prerequisite for effective IRD is RESPECT. However, respect is a pretty abstract quality. How does one practice this?

Respect, or "honor and esteem" is subjective. What can be seen as very respectful to one may be seen as very disrespectful to another.

A missionary friend who served in a very conservative Islamic region was relating one of his local friends saying to him, "I have never met your wife!" When he said this, he was giving my friend a big compliment. In essence he was telling my friend--- "I know you come from a very different culture, but I have a lot of respect for you in that you have adjusted yourself to our culture, including in following our cultural value of maintaining a strong separation of the sexes."

In a different situation that statement could mean something entirely different. In some cultures, an evidence that one is accepted as a close friend is to invite the other home to meet the family. So if a person in that cultural context said, "I have never met your wife!" it would be more like saying, "You have never felt comfortable inviting me over to your place. I feel disrespected."

Some cultures show respect in greeting with handshakes, some with bows, some with a kiss, and some with holding hands together as if in prayer. The cultural context of the recipient of the greeting determines its appropriateness.

Respect is then dependent on cultural expectations as well as individual expectations. Respect then takes a certain knowledge of the culture of the person. This comes from taking the time to learn the culture. In general, even the attempt to learn a culture is viewed as respectful to people in that culture.

To know the individual expectations of respect requires dialogue with the person. That is iterative. One speaks with another, to learn how to demonstrate respect so that one can respectfully speak with another.

While respect is subjective, there is an aspect of it is not simply based on the other person. There is an aspect in which it depends on yourself as well. Do you respect the other person? Respect is made easier with

a good theological anthropology. After all, if one understands that the other person is made in God's image, designed by God, and loved by God, looking down on the other simply does not make sense. Equally, if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, it is hard to imagine a sort of love for another that does not involve some level of respect (and wouldn't we see our love for ourselves tied to respect for ourselves)? The Golden Rule also points to respecting others since pretty much everyone wants to be shown respect. Even if, emotionally, one is tempted to disrespect, good theology points to the fact that respect is deserved in the other, and commanded of us.

On a practical level, if no one (excluding Christ for the moment) has ever been 100% right about everything, it is equally certain that no one has ever been 100% wrong about everything either. It is also quite certain that anyone you are speaking to knows something that is true that you don't know. That deserves some respect, and certainly demonstrating respect makes it more likely that you will learn what you need to know.

Consider the following story: My class wanted to attend the worship service at a local Sikh Temple. One member of the class visited the temple asking their permission to come as a group to the next worship service. They were told that they were welcome. My class showed up at their appointed time before the service. The host showed them around the temple including the bed where the Granth, their sacred text, is kept when not used in the worship service. They asked if they could take some pictures during the service and were told that they could. They asked if it would be okay to turn around (with their back to the Granth) and take pictures behind them. Again they were told they could. During the service there was a time when the Granth was carried around the sanctuary. My students asked if it was appropriate to join the procession or to step aside. After the service, they were invited to join the communal meal. They joined the meal, and it was a nice time all around. My students did not know how best to demonstrate respect, so they asked.

Mutuality

According to Martin Buber:

"The presupposition of genuine dialogue is not that the partners agree beforehand to relativize their own convictions, but that they accept each other as persons."[2]

Mutuality is not as commonly promoted as a Biblical virtue as some others. Yet, it is a strongly Biblical virtue, especially in the New Testament. Mutuality describes equal support. It implies two different aspects: Equal in level, and equal in interdependence.

Consider Figure 7. The figure shows two people-- A and B. In the top part of the figure is A and B in unequal levels. If they are communicating, A is "talking down" to B, The middle part of the figure shows the two in equal position, but not equal in interdependence. If they are in conversation, A is "talking at" B, with little communication back from B to A. The bottom one shows equality in role and in interdependence. They have mutuality in conversation. A and B are "talking with" each other.

Mutuality applies to many things beyond talking. The church has often struggled with the battle between seemingly competing virtues of submission and mutuality. Typically, the church has tended to focus more on submission--- submission to authorities, to parents, to husbands. Yet built into each of these is a mutuality. Jesus modeled and taught a form of leadership built on serving, not being served. Wives may be told to submit to their husbands, but husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church. And that form of love involves self-sacrifice and serving. It is hardly surprising then, that the, perhaps, most well-known passage on submission in the Bible, Ephesians 5:21ff, opens with an overarching call to mutuality, "Submit one to another, out of reverence to Christ," and then concludes with the theme of mutuality with the body metaphor of Christ and the church.

The book of Philemon can be read as a book of Christian mutuality. Paul appeals to Philemon not to punish Onesimus, Philemon's slave. Rather to accept him back, and even give him his freedom, and treat him as a full brother in Christ. Paul doesn't actually order him to do that, for to do so would be to place himself as an authority. Rather Paul appeals to him as a fellow partner. The book sometimes is seen as a half-hearted rejection of slavery. However, it may better be seen as how Christian love and Jesus' form of leadership is applied to a difficult situation, rather than law and hierarchy.
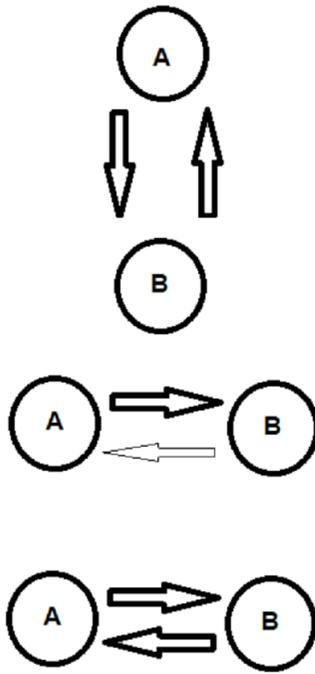
Figure 7. Relationship Types

Many of the verses on mutuality are found as "one another passages."
There are many of these. A few of them include:

- "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..." (Romans 12:10)

- "...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)

- "Live in harmony with one another..." (Romans 12:16)

- "...Love one another..." (Romans 13:8)

- "...Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)

- "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..."

(Romans 15:7)

- "...Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)

- "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16)

- "...When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (I Cor. 11:33)

- "...Have equal concern for each other. (I Cor. 12:25)

- "...Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)

- "Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2)

- "...Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)

- "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)

- "...Forgiving each other..." (Ephesians 4:32)

These principles apply to Christians within the church. Some other statements of the same order were given by Jesus to His disciples--most famously, John 15:12, "Love each other as I have loved you." But to what extent does mutuality apply to dealing with non-Christians, those outside of the church?

On a strict, rather legalistic, level one could say that since these statement are given to the church for behavior within the church, it doesn't apply to a Christian's relationship with those outside of the church. HOWEVER, mutuality could be understood as a logical application of the Great Commandment among fellow Christians. The argument could be, 'If I love my Christian neighbor as myself, as Jesus so instructed and modeled, and my Christian neighbor does the same, then we relate to each other in a state of mutual love for each other. And if we do that then the other characteristics of mutuality must then also apply (we bear each other's burdens, we encourage each other, we forgive each other, etc.).'

But... the Great Commandment was not given to believers only to relate to other believers ('love your friends, hate your enemies'). Rather

it is for all followers of Christ to all peoples. We may love our families differently than we love members of our church, and we may love members of our church differently than we love members of other church, and all of these different than we love strangers or "enemies." Regardless, if our behavior to any group is unloving, then clearly we have failed to follow Christ. In like manner, we serve, forgive, encourage, and show hospitality, in a manner that is Christlike even for those outside the faith.

It is interesting to note that over the years mutuality has grown outside of the church, commonly influenced by the church. Sometimes they caught on and even went ahead of the church. Human rights grew out of Judeo-Christian principles where each person has basic rights that are not based on race, gender, nationality, status or achievement. The movement against slavery began largely in the church, and grew beyond the church as some churches sought to defend the practice. Servant-Leadership has now become popularized in business and governance, even while some churches defend unilateral submission.

Dialogue works best from a position of mutuality. We treat each other with respect and with equality. We are there to teach and there to learn. We are there to encourage and be encouraged. We are there to help the other grow, and grow oneself. There is no guarantee that the other will accept those terms. The other may draw away, or may seek to assume a position of authority. We have no control over the other, we only have control over ourselves.

Listening

Listening is a clear evidence of respect and of mutuality. If you respect the other person, you take what they say seriously and pay attention. If you seek to be listened to, you demonstrate that through setting the good example of listening to the other person.

Listening should normally be "active." The term "active listening" is commonly used in pastoral care and counseling. A few of the aspects are as follows:

- It is listening, not just hearing. One tries to focus on what is being said, so as to try to understand what the other person means. As such, one is not just hearing without trying to

understand. It is also not just focusing on what one will say once the other stops speaking.

- Communicate even while listening one is still communicating. Physically, one exhibits interest and a desire to hear more. Verbal cues ("Yes," "I see," and so forth) as well as nodding head and such should be done to encourage the person to share more and that you are responsive to what that person is saying.
- Seek clarification or ask questions both to minimize miscommunication and to, again, demonstrate interest. (But don't keep jumping in with comments or questions so as to keep them from speaking).
- Demonstrate attentiveness. Make it clear that the other person has your full attention. Do not allow your mind to wander or wave to others as they walk by. Don't start texting on your phone, or keep looking at the time. If possible, talk where there are minimal distractions.
- Create a safe space. Make it clear that you are open to hearing what they have to say without your being angry. Also, again, try to meet where there is a safe space for the person to talk without fear from being overheard by others.

It is worth noting, however, that it is perfectly acceptable to expect to receive what you give. You can make it clear that you will listen to them attentively and without anger, but that you expect the same from them. That is part of mutuality. However, if they refuse to show respect to you when you talk, it is not a justification to be disrespectful to them when they talk. Perhaps it would be best simply to protect your boundaries and suggest that the two of you could meet at another time when both can be good listeners.

Discussion.

1. Muslims (the ones I am familiar with at least) would not place their Scripture under their arm (up against the armpit) or face the sole of one's shoe toward it as these are seen as dishonoring behaviors. Many people of different religions would not consider 'marking up' their Scripture as it would be seen as a form of desecration. Christians commonly hold to the belief that the meaning of Holy Bible is holy more than the physical pages and cover. As such, Christians often behave rather carelessly with the physical Bible. A Christian would be wise not to do anything that desecrates or dishonors anothers' Scripture in their eyes.   With that in mind, how should one treat the Bible, physically, when in the presence of people of other faiths?

2. Find 10 more "One another" verses in the Epistles of the Bible (Pauline and General). How might these verses provide insight in how one would hold dialogue with a person of a different faith?

Chapter 8

Relationships Between Religions and God

In Chapter 5 was listed a range of views that Christians have with regards to salvation. The range of beliefs points to the fact that there is no single unified opinion on this matter. The same can be said of the relationship between religions and God and Christianity and other religions.

Views that Christians Have Regarding Christianity

Three views that Christians have regarding Christianity can be considered from the model of the solar system.

Christianity-Centered

Theologian John Hick suggested in God and the Universe of Faiths that for centuries, Christians have viewed other religions in an analogous fashion to the Ptolemaic view of the solar system. In that view, the Earth is the center of the solar system (or even universe) and other bodies, such as planets and the sun, circle around it. In similar fashion, Christians saw Christianity as the center, and other religions circle around it. With this view then, Christianity is the standard, and other religions can be evaluated in terms of how close their "orbit" is to Christianity. The closer the religion is in orbit to Christianity, the closer it comes to being 'right," although still wrong.

Refer to Figure 8 to show this "Ptolemaic" System.
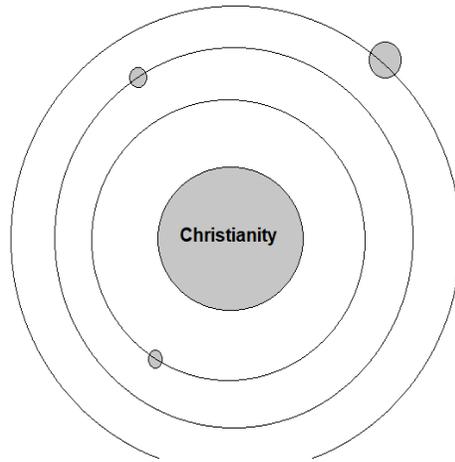
Figure 8. Christianity-Centered System

God-Centered

Hick suggested a radical shift akin to the Copernican revolution where the view of the solar system is shifted to where the sun takes its place in the center of the solar system, and each planet, including the earth, revolves around it. The analogy to religions is shown in Figure 9.

With this view in mind, God now moves to the center and each religion, including Christianity circles around the center-- God. This may seem quite reasonable, but there is a cost. By making God the center and Christianity one of many religions circling God, the uniqueness of Christianity is brought into question. After all, this view could imply that all religions in one way or another are seeking God--- and who is to say that Christianity is better than others in this. And even if Christianity is better than the others, it could be suggested that Christianity is not uniquely different from other religions, just a bit better in its understanding of God.

Spirit-Centered

The Christianity-centered system can be viewed as wrong since it appears to grant Christianity a role it does not deserve. Placing God in

the center seems more correct yet places Christianity's uniqueness in question. Others have made suggestions for other perspectives. One move has been suggested to address the relationship between Christianity and other faiths has been to place the Spirit in the center.. A common argument for this is that "Spirit" is more universal than other concepts-- even more universal than "God." Most religious faiths (and non-religious "faiths" can connect with a concept that can be described as spirit. For example, most tribal groups believe in spirits, of one form or another, to such an extent that such groups are known by some as spiritists. Eastern religions have concepts such as Chi or prana that can be linked to the Christian term "spirit."[2] Such a method is following the logic of finding common ground or universality as essential as a foundation for dialogue.
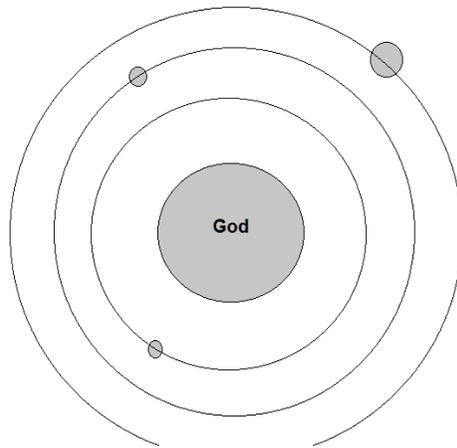

Figure 9. God-Centered System

Similar thoughts have been used in pastoral theology where in many settings, the term "pastoral care" is replaced by "spiritual care." The thought is that the term "pastoral," being linked to the Judeo-Christian metaphor of the shepherd, is too particularistic. The term "spiritual" seems more interfaith or ecumenical and therefore more appropriate. The problem with this logic in terms of care also applies to dialogue. The term "spiritual" is highly abstract. People generally struggle with abstract concepts and so commonly use metaphors-- "concrete" objects, or at least less abstract terms, to explain more abstract terms. One can gain insight into providing care for a person from the metaphor of a

shepherd, but how does "spiritual" inform care? Likewise, saying that a Christian and a Korean Buddhist can talk because they have the common ground because the 3rd member of the Christian Trinity as well as the Korean concept of "Chi" can be both labeled as spirit, may be poorly guided by the term. The commonality is achieved through using the term "spirit" that is so loosely defined that it hides differences rather than informs them.[3]
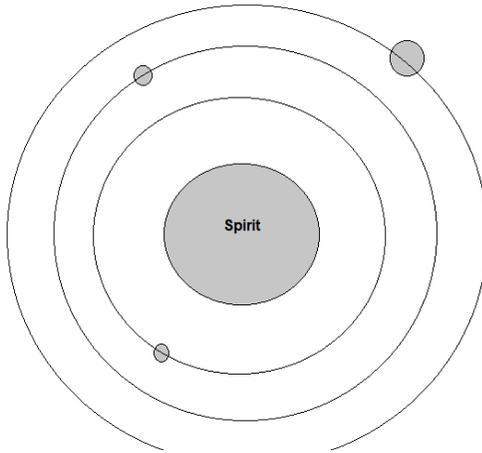

Figure 10. Spirit-Centered System

The center of a solar system must have body to it. The sun holds the planets in their orbits by its gravitational pull. A term that is so loosely used that it has no clear and consistent meaning is like a sun with little to no gravitational pull... little foundation for meaningful dialogue. Note, that spirit-centered dialogue is not unique in this. When "God" is so loosely defined that anything can be described as god, the same problem can occur. In the next category "Christ-centered," the problem can also occur. While Christ as a living physical person is less abstract that the term "spirit," there are still many views of Christ, so some form of limitation is needed to provide 'weight' to the term.

Christ-Centered

In response to Hick in the 1970s was a response from Max Warren, who will be referred to more in the next chapter. He suggested another possibility. Rather than placing Christianity in the center, or God, one could place Christ. More specifically, one would be placing the "Revealed Christ" there. Why "Revealed"? Because there are many different "Christs" in many different religions. Islam has its own understanding of Jesus as do the Mormons, and other groups. Some Christians even separate between the "Historical Jesus" and the "Christ of Faith."
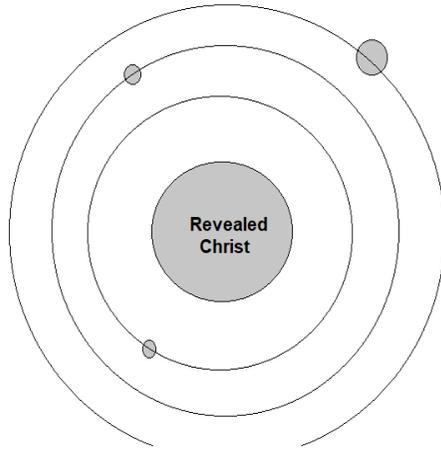

Figure 11. Christ-Centered System

With the Revealed Christ as the center, Christianity is moved out of the center and risks a loss of uniqueness in terms of other religions. However, the advantages arguably outweigh the disadvantages. Harvey Cox has challenged the value of a Pneumatocentric (spirit-centered dialogue, and other centers as well, in support of a Christocentric Dialogue. First, interreligious dialogue must address both universal elements and particular elements of the religions in discourse, and Christ is an obviously particularistic element in Christianity. Even to delay talking about Christ is seen to Cox as simply "at least to some degree --engaging in the necessary pleasantries that often precede a genuine conversation but are really not integral to it." Second, those of other faiths tend to find the issue of Christ as of most interest in dialogue. Finally, Christ not only provides a strong topical center or object in dialogue, but also provides methodological principles.[4] These methods were listed in chapter 3 of this book.

Towards a Trinitarian-Centered Model?

All of the models, including the Church-Centered model, have their advantages, and disadvantages. Ignoring the Church-Centered model for the moment, the weaknesses of each comes from a "wishy-washy" quality of the center. The term God is so loosely used when it pertains to conversations across religious boundaries, that one must wonder if one shares enough common ground to even say one is speaking of the same thing. Perhaps even a bigger problem with regards to abstraction is found in the word "Spirit," a term that can mean anything, everything, and nothing. Christ seems like a better choice. Yet many religions have christs--- a great prophet, a religious agitator, a god among many, a spiritually enlightened guide, a possible Bodhisattva, and more. In other words, there may need to be a center to the center.

Christian understanding of God is grounded in the Trinity--- the Triune God. Veli-Matti Karkkainen has made the argument that a Pneumatological method of conversation with other religions needs a Trinitarian grounding.[5] Others have made similar claims questioning the value of pluralistic or relativistic approaches, recognizing the centrality of the Trinity to an understanding of the Christian foundation for discussion.[6] Frankly, considering the various christs of other religions, it is important to recognize the Christ of Christianity is understood in terms of divine self-revelation as noted in Hebrews chapter 1.Hebrews chapter 1. As such, we need to ground our conversation in terms of Christ as revealed in the Christian faith. This suggests a Trinitarian model.

That being said, should one then have a Trinitarian-Centered model? Probably not, IF by that one means that the Trinity is the central object of discussion, rather than the guiding methodology. What it probably DOES mean, however, is that any speaking of God, Spirit, or Christ between a Christian and a non-Christian should be well-grounded (on the Christian's side) on a Trinitarian understanding of those terms, from the Christian's side of the conversation..

<u>Author's Conclusions</u>

This author believes that Christ provides the best foundation for interreligious dialogue generally speaking. This Christ is the Christ of Christianity--- a self-revealing of God--- a Trinitarian Christ.

This does not mean that discussion cannot address other Christs. In Dialogue, Jesus can be talked about as a great prophet and healer with a Muslim, a source of grace to a Mahayana Buddhist, an Enlightened One, or Political/Social agitator, great teacher, or divine being, to other groups. However, the Christian should not be lost in a relativistic fog... there must be a sound grounding of belief. Each "christ" may have aspects of truth, falseness, and deception. However, the standard is a Biblical-theological understanding of Jesus as the Christ.

Discussion

1. Have a discussion with a person of another (non-Christian) religion. Ask them what the terms "God," "Spirit," or Jesus mean to them--- in their words. Discuss this with others (such as in your class) who did the same. Do they use the terms the same as you do or not? What are the ramifications of having different definitions for these terms?

Chapter 9

Views that Christians Have Regarding Other Religions

Curly, Larry, and Moe (not the famous trio) were asked if they believe that there is a single largest animal. After much discussion, they came to the conclusion that since there are animals of many different sizes on earth, it stands to reason that there must be some animal that could be described or labeled "the largest animal on earth." While they firmly believed such an animal must exist, they soon discovered that they could not agree what that animal looked like. Moe said that it was a large grayish four-legged creature with big ears and a long nose. Larry disagreed, saying he saw such an animal as looking like a big fish in water, but breathes air. Curly, on the other hand, stated with confidence that it was a big winged creature that breathed fire.

Do we really worship the same God?

As was noted in the previous chapter, the term "God" is a fairly abstract term, in the sense that God is not directly sensed, much like "love" or "spirit." As such a common question is whether or not we, in different faiths, worship the same God or not. While the goal is not to confuse anyone in this section, it is still beneficial to understand some of the complexity inherent in what seemingly should be a simple question. There are several possible answers. The author's recommendation is at the end, but that is not to say that other answers lack merit.

First, the argument could be made that no two persons on earth worship the same God.

Gordon Kaufmann has made the argument that we need to separate between "The God Who Is" and the "God We Create." This second "god" is the one we imagine and the one we worship. The "God Who Is" is beyond our capacity to truly know, so the god we worship will not be identical to the one true God, and not completely identical to anyone else's conception of God.[1]

This is good to know. It gives us a bit of humility to understand that each one of us has a level of misunderstanding of God. However, from an Evangelical Christian perspective, we must wrestle with this because it leads to a question of "How much error in our faith in God is acceptable to be saved by God?" This should lead us back to the understanding as Christians that we are saved by faith in God, not in our perfection of knowledge about God. Still, if all of us are wrong to some extent as to the nature of the God who is, how wrong is too wrong, and is it possible that Christians may gain insight on God from those who are not?

We will leave this one alone since we are looking at religious systems more than individual opinions. Each religion has a perception of God even if its members may vary in that perception.

A second position would simply be "No."

Different religions seek to inform on the divine, including the nature of God or gods. Differences as to God from different religions suggest different Gods. A naive perspective may say that two religions point to one god as the creator of all things, and if there can only be one such god, then they must be pointing to the same god. While this seems logical, labels don't really work that way. Consider the short story of Curly, Larry, and Moe at the beginning of this chapter.

Although all three believed in something that could be called "the largest animal on earth," in fact they believed in three different things--an elephant, a whale, and a dragon. Only one of the three is correct, and even then we would have to speak to Larry more to be sure if he was exactly correct or only approximate in his understanding of this creature.

Likewise, two religions may describe something as "God" or as "Creator of the Universe" and yet clearly point to very different things. In fact, although Jews, Muslims, and Christians all believe in the "God of Abraham," the "Creator of Heaven and Earth," there are considerable differences in their understanding. The common labels actually obscure the differences, but the differences remain.

A third argument is to say "Yes"

All religions point to the same God. It can be equally naive to say that a God (of the Christian), Allah, Yahweh, and Vishnu must be different gods because they have different names or are worshiped by different groups. It may be too much to say "Yes,"we all worship the same God unreservedly. Yet, one needs to investigate further. For example, Jews and Christians share an understanding of God based on the Hebrew Bible. We worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the other hand our difference regarding the Trinity could be described as profound. If we still say that we worship the same God, then would we say that we share the same God with Muslims, since they also see themselves as worshiping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Many would say "Yes."

If one says Yes regarding the Abrahamic religions, must one also say Yes regarding other conceptions of God from other religions as well? How much different is too different? This is hard to answer. For now, let's consider other alternatives.

This author would suggest two other options. These are "Yes but" and "No but."

- No But   A thoughtful answer could go something like this--- "No (we don't worship the same God) but we seek to." Christians, Muslims, and Jews seek to worship the God of Abraham, the creator of the heavens and earth. In other words, we all seek to worship our Creator/Designer, the GOD WHO IS. That being said, the goal does not mean that the goal is achieved. Much like the three who believe in the largest animal on earth, belief in one thing doesn't necessarily mean the object of the belief is ultimately the same for everyone.

- Yes But Taking inspiration from the words of Jesus, this answer seems reasonable. When speaking with the Samaritan woman in John 4, she notes that the Jews worship the God of Jacob in Jerusalem while the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim. Jesus responds in verse 22. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." Continuing further, Jesus makes it clear, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." This clarifies the issue just a bit. The issue with the Samaritans not about their location of worship, but the object of their worship. One way to look at this is that Jesus is saying, "Yes (we worship the same God), but you worship the God that you don't know." Worship is not critically tied to place or style. It is, however, tied to the issue of truth--- who is God?

Of the five options given, probably the most technically accurate is the first one. We ultimately always worship a god in our minds who is less than the God who truly is. However, the answer is not very useful in IRD. Ultimately, when we speak interreligiously we are seeking to do more than compare personal mental images of God. The second and third options are probably too simplistic in many circumstances. A more nuanced answer is probably one of the final two (Yes But, or No But)

What are Christians' Views of Other Religions?

Norman Anderson noted that Christians have various views as to from where other religions come.[2] This is not exactly to say whether religions are right or wrong. Rather, what is the basis or source of other religions. The categories, described by Anderson, generally start from a presumption of uniqueness of the Christian faith from other religions.

One possibility is that other religions come from Satan. This is a view that is especially enticing to many Evangelical Christians. Satan is seen Biblically as an accuser, a tempter, and a deceiver. This last label provides support for this view. Satan as deceiver provides alternatives to the Christian faith to lead people away from Christ. To do this, Satan may provide that which is false, or may distort the truth. If other religions come from Satan, and Satan is "The Father of Lies," then our

goal would be to avoid being tainted by beliefs from other religions.

Possibly in support of this is Deuteronomy 32:16-17 where worshiping idols is seen as sacrificing to demons. On the other hands, many other passages in the Bible, such as Psalm 115:4-8, describe idols as lifeless and useless --- merely a creation of humans.

A second possibility is that other religions come from Man. This view is of course common, and recognizes humans as purpose-seeking. They have the great existential questions: Why am I here? What is my purpose? Is there special meaning to my/our existence? Is there truth that I can hold onto and trust? What happens after I die? When humans look for such answers and don't get them, they tend to look for answers on their own way. An example of this in in Exodus 32. Verse one states, "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'"

In Exodus 32, it is impossible to say that Satan had no role in the episode. However, the behavior was very human. They sought stability and answers from Yahweh, through Moses. But as time continued, they lost hope. They started to think they had bet on the wrong prophet. So they went to Moses' closest confidante, his brother, and asked him to give them a god (one that would not be so scary and dangerous presumably). In essence, they were asking Aaron to create a religion for them that works.

Harvie Cox has noted, "*All human beings have an innate need to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by. Religion, whatever else it has done, has provided one of the main ways of meeting this abiding need.*"[3] If all other religions are created by man, then what should be the Christian's attitude for these religions? Probably they should be viewed more positively than if they come from Satan. The reason is that they are motivated by very understandable human fears, hopes, and needs. We may be offended by the story of Exodus 32, but we also understand that they were driven by fear in the face of the unknown, and hope for help from the divine. Additionally, the answers that a man-made religion finds are probably not going to be completely false. If a religion is created by Satan, one might guess that everything that a religion provides is either false, or misdirecting. That is because

Satan would presumably be creating the religion with malice of intent. On the other hand, a religion created by man is not created with such malice, but driven by presumably commendable human aspirations. As such, it would be probable that at least some of the teachings are true, although it would be doubtful that any such religion would be completely correct.

A third possibility is that other religions come from God. At first this seems ridiculous, especially from an Evangelical perspective. There is an aspect of this however, that flows quite naturally from Evangelical thought. The concept of "Missio Dei" is that God is at work everywhere and at all times. As such, the Mission Dei, mission of God, is not the same as the" Missio Ecclessiae," the mission of the church. God may work primarily through the church, but not exclusively --- and so may be working where the church does not exist. Such work where the church is not could be seen, perhaps, in its religious beliefs and practices.

From this comes the view of the "Praeparatio evangelica"-- preparation for the gospel. This suggests that another religion may not have the gospel, but can point towards the gospel. This is similar to the idea of "redemptive analogies" as was popularized by Don Richardson.

Take the time to read through Appendix A where a brief description of the Longhouse Religion, the religion associated with a North American tribes known as the Iroquois. The religion is based on the revelations of a man whose name, in English, translates as Handsome Lake.

Example Case: Gaiwiio

Gaiwiio, also known as the Longhouse Religion was a religion based on the prophecies and teachings of Handsome Lake. It is practiced by some members of the 6 tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy--- mostly in what is now New York State in the United States.

Review Appendix A for some of the teachings found in the Code of Handsome Lake. Consider what is the source of this religion. Frankly, much of what is in the Code is quite commendable.

Option #1. It comes from God.

If God is at work in all places and at all times, then God was at work where Handsome Lake lived when he claimed to have a vision from The Creator. Although there are differences between Biblical revelation and that which Handsome Lake said he received and later collected into the Code of Handsome Lake, it expresses a doctrine far closer to Christian teachings than the traditional belief system of the Iroquois. Could it be possible that he had received a partial message from God to prepare the Iroquois people for the gospel. It would then be thought of as a Praeparatio Evangelica... a preparation of the gospel. It is true that today, the majority of Iroquois are Christians.

If the Longhouse Religion originated with God, then we should be supported, to some extent, as it may be an open door for the Gospel to enter, with stories (redemptive analogies), rituals, and metaphors that bridge the cultural gap for God's message of hope.

In the Book of Acts, God spoke to Cornelius to contact Peter so that Peter could share the Gospel. Some even interpret Mosaic Law as a preparation for the message of Christ. Other stories exist in missions of groups of people who seem to have been given a partial message of truth in preparation for the Christian message.[4]

Option #2. It comes from Satan.

If Satan is the deceiver, then presumably he gives false or misleading messages to steer people from God. The culture of the Iroquois, as well as the polytheistic religious belief system were in a state of decay in the late 1700s. Christian missionaries were starting to interact with the Iroquois. The Longhouse Religion could be seen as a more resilient alternative to the old animistic beliefs-- a religion that still, ultimately, does not lead people to Christ. In support of this is the fact that the old Animistic beliefs of the Iroquois have essentially disappeared with the advent of Christianity among the Iroquois, but the Longhouse Religion has endured as an alternative belief system.

If the Longhouse Religion originated with Satan, it should be vigorously opposed as it is a trap to lead people away from God.

Option #3. It comes from Man.

Handsome Lake was born into a time of relative prosperity of the Iroquois, but saw his culture begin to break down with British and American expansion into their lands. He also had been struggling with vices that have come from the Europeans, especially alcohol. It is quite easy to imagine that he saw the need for a cultural revitalization, a system that gives new dignity and strength to the Iroquois people and a stronger ethical system. In doing this, he may have intentionally combined aspects of Iroquois beliefs with Christian innovations he picked up from Quaker missionaries who were moving into the area. He may have additionally added his own ideas that reflect his own struggles and victories.

If the Longhouse Religion originated with Man, it should be honored as a quest by the people, a hope, for something better. And since it reveals the hopes and fears of the people, it is also highly revelatory of the people. So even if it doesn't reveal God, it certainly reveals the values and dreams of the people who practice it.

There is also a fourth option worth considering:

Option 4. It is all three.

Religions are a human quest to answer the great questions that have plagued mankind for millennia, and give guidance in how to live a valuable life. In that quest, God is at work, and Satan is at work. As such, Religions are complex systems that, potentially, have aspects that are horrible, commendable, and divine.

Discussion

1. Watch Megan Phelps-Roper's TED Talk on dialogue.[5] She was raised in one of the more extreme Christian groups in terms of both doctrine and "hate speech." With discussion of other people of other faiths or political positions, she eventually left her church. Consider the suggestions she makes for healthy dialogue (especially within the setting of social media). Do you find these suggestions helpful? (These items are repeated in Appendix D) How do these suggestions compare with how many converse with those they disagree with on-line?

2. Megan Phelps-Roper would now describe herself as not a practicing Christian. Should this be seen as evidence of the dangers of IRD or not?

Chapter 10

Rules of Dialogue

There has long been a disagreement as to the best way to hold dialogue across religious boundaries. In the early 1970s considerable dialogue (argument) occurred between John Hick and Max Warren. Some of this was discussed back in Chapter 8.

Max Warren developed seven Rules for Interreligious Dialogue, through his years of holding such conversations around the world. Appendix D lists several other rules of dialogue developed by other. This chapter, however, will focus on those developed by Warren.[1]

#1. Acceptance of our Common Humanity. Dialogue is not between two ideologies or religions, but between two people... created in the image of God.

This point embraces the idea that the most important characteristic of the individuals in a conversation is their shared humanity. We, as humans are more alike than different. Our unity as humans created in God's image is greater than our diversity in terms of sex, race, ethnicity, language, family, culture, or religion.

Additionally, this rule is based on the reality that religions do not talk. They are abstractions. One cannot have a dialogue with Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam. One, however, can have a conversation with a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Muslim. Even in this, each religious adherent is a person first. As such, there can be no assumption that one understands the beliefs of an individual simply based on what religion he or she claims to ascribe to.

#2. Divine Omnipresence. Entering into a dialogue, one is not entering alone. God is there, and has prepared the situation long

before one arrived.

The basis for this comes not only from the Divine attribute of God's omnipresence, but also from the missiological concept, "Missio Dei." In the 20th century this term was popularized by Karl Barth. Barth described it in terms of "The Sending God" (Missio Dei). In other words, the Father sends the Son to minister in the world, and both send the Spirit to minister. Karl Hartenstein in 1934 expanded this idea emphasizing that God is a missional God, at work in all places and at all times. Thus, there can be understood to be a difference between the Missio Dei (God's Mission) and the Missio Ecclessiae (the Mission of the Church).[2] This idea more recently has been voiced by Henry Blackaby and Avery Willis with the expression, "God is on mission, and invites us to join Him in that mission."[3]

Based on this understanding, Whenever we go to a new place, or join another in a conversation, we are always going where God already is, and already has been working.

#3. Accepting the best in other religions. Don't focus on what is bad about other religions... freely acknowledge their good points as well. That is fair and honest, prepares others to accept what is good in the Christian faith, and   establishes the setting to identify real differences, as well as similarities.

The basis for this rule is the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule states that we are to treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated. If someone outside of Christianity was discussing our faith, we would want them to express the best of our faith not the examples of the worst people who call themselves Christians, nor examples of the most aberrant beliefs held by some people who call themselves Christians. We would prefer to have our beliefs and structures and members treated fairly or, better than fairly, kindly.

#4. Identification. Attempt to understand them as if you were one of them. Think   incarnationally.   Imaginatively   "walk in their shoes" to understand what they believe, why they believe it, and why it makes sense to them.

Identification draws its inspiration from Christ. Sometimes called "Incarnational Ministry," one ministers more effectively if one participates as much as possible within the cultural system of the other.

In Cultural Anthropology, one could look at this as "Participant Observation," learning as an outsider by participating with insiders.[4]

#5. Courtesy. Dialogue with identifiable respect. In other words, Rules #1, 3, and 4 are not just rules to embrace, but should be identifiable by the other in ones words, demeanor, and actions.

Courtesy or respect was spoken of in an earlier chapter. A lot of mistakes in dialogue can be overcome if there is respect/courtesy evidenced. If one doesn't know how best to demonstrate courtesy in a different environment --- ask.

#6. Interpretation. Sharing one's faith to another is not one of proclamation or didactics. Rather it is one of interpretation... contextualization... translation. One must attempt to make one's faith understandable within the symbol structure of the other, NOT one's own structure.

Interpretation is the principle of contextualization. "Contextualization" as a concept goes back to the first century. Paul spoke of being a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks. However, as a term, contextualization only goes back to the early 1970s. There is considerable disagreement in how to define contextualization, as well as what methodology should be used to contextualize. Despite this, it is quite clear that one should intentionally adapt the message to the culture being spoken too, without letting go of what is vital and true. More on contextualization in the next chapter.[5]

#7. Expectancy. God is at work in the dialogue, and one should be expectant that this work will   ultimately bear fruit in one way or another... in the other AND in oneself.

The basis for this goes back to the idea of the Missio Dei, but even more specifically to a Pneumatological understanding of God's work in the present. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Wisdom that draws people to Himself. Our role is not meaningless, but it is inadequate. We cannot compel anyone to believe or to change. Our role is to assist, and not hinder, the Spirit of God. Beyond that we have no power.

Discussion

1. Consider the quote by Harvie Conn on Harvey Smit in referring to the Greek term "skandalon" or offense--- the idea that the Gospel message is an offense (at least on some level to unbelievers):

    "Dr. Harvey Smit outlines two features of this approach to the idea of offense that have relevance for our questions. He calls them 'two lines which are in tension": (1) All unnecessary offense must be avoided as something that endangers another's faith; (2) there is an essential offense that must never be avoided, for it is only be overcoming this skandalon that a person comes to faith."[6]

    How does this quote relate to Max Warren's rules. Is Warren suggesting that our thinking best of others and demonstrating courtesy and identifying the other mean that we express the Gospel message in such a way that it gives no offense to the other?

2. After looking through this chapter, as well as Appendix D, we see that there are many different rules or guidelines for interreligious dialogue (IRD). While in different forms of communication there are sets of guidelines or helpful hints, none seem draw interest in to guidelines as does interreligious dialogue. Why is this? Is there something about this form of communication that requires guidelines or rules? Or is there something about us as humans who need help to carry out IRD constructively, rather than destructively?

3. Read over this chapter and Appendix D. Make your own list of 7 guidelines that make sense to you for IRD.

Chapter 11

Dialogue and Contextualization

> When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.
>
> Acts 14:11-13

Contextualization has been around as a concept for millennia. Paul said, in I Corinthians 9:20,

> *To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.*

Paul, in essence, is saying, "*I am trying to persuade people of different backgrounds to agree with what I believe is important and true, The problem is that <u>for them to understand what I am saying, I have to make the effort to understand them first</u>. Once I have done this, then I can make myself as one of them and communicate the message in a way that makes sense to them.*"

The term "contextualization" only goes back to the early 1970s In 1972, Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsezian used the term "Contextualization" in their report on Ministry and Context at the 3rd Commissioning Program of the Theological Education Fund.[1]

When Max Warren came up with his 7 Rules of Dialogue (1967 approximately) the term "contextualization" was not in use. But when he said that the belief system of the Christian faith must be interpreted, it means that it must be adapted and presented in a way that it can be understood by the other and responded to appropriately by the other. This process of adaptation is contextualization.

Interpretation Always Happens.

The hearer is constantly interpreting what is being shared. Note the passage of Scripture at the beginning of this chapter. Acts 14:11-13 describes Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary trip. They were in Asia Minor. As part of their presentation of the message of the Christian faith, they did some miraculous healings. The people who saw it responded in a manner quite consistent with their belief system. They saw them as divine beings who were visiting them. Barnabas as the leader of the group was understood to be Zeus. Paul as the primary speaker was identified as Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Based on that interpretation, they responded in a manner appropriate to that same worldview. They sought to offer wreaths of honor, and bulls for sacrifice. Years later on the island of Malta, Paul had a somewhat similar misinterpretation take place (Acts 28:1-6).

Knowing that interpretation always happens, it is the responsibility of the one speaking (in this case the Christian) to minimize misinterpretation and the likelihood of an undesirable response. This is not easy. Feedback can help, but ultimately, the speaker should encode his or her message the same way as the hearer will decode it.[2] To do that, the speaker must know a great deal about the hearers.

Figure 12 attempts to represent this. If a speaker comes from a Culture A that is represented by a circle, and is speaking to a responder from Culture B represented by a square, communication is likely to be problematic.[4] Paul Hiebert describes three options. Non-contextualization is where the speaker makes little to no accommodation to the respondent's culture and thinking. He or she remains circular. In essence, the hope is that responder bridges the cultural gap, becoming 'circular' to understand what the circular missionary is saying. Uncritical contextualization is shown by the circle becoming a square describing where the speaker's message is modified or watered down (or relativized) to the extent that it expresses nothing new or transformative to the conversation. Key aspects of the

message are lost. Critical contextualization is shown as speaker A represented by a square with rounded edges (or perhaps a circle with squared sides) expressing an attempt to adapt to the second context while still holding onto what is critical and transformative. This assumes that one knows what it critical and transformative. In this geometric example, the critical would be the curves, so a square with the corners replaced by curves would be appropriate. If the critical matter is a lack of straight lines, this example would demonstrate syncretism, a loss of critical features by blending of cultures or religions. This is simple in concept, but challenging in practice.[5]
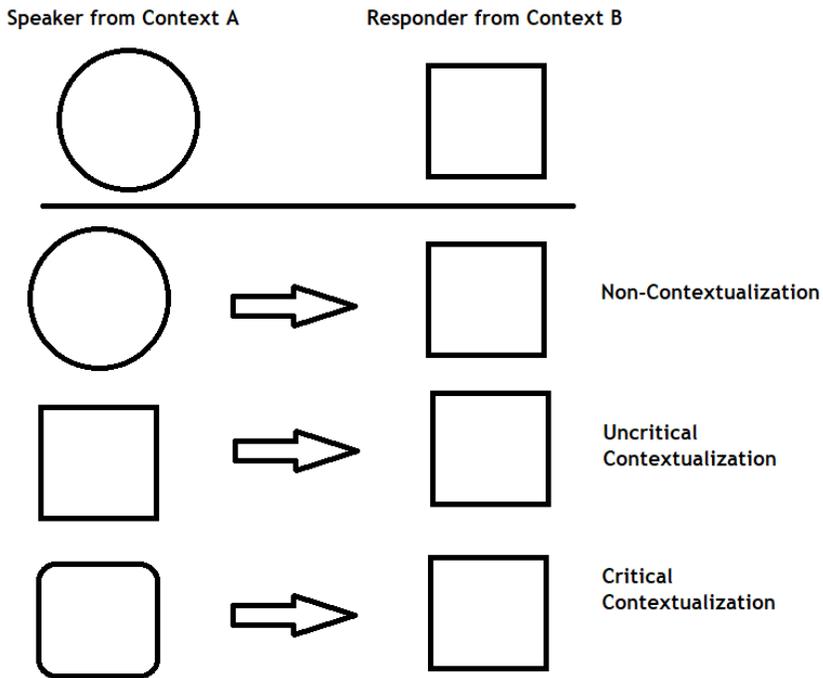
Figure 12. Forms of Contextualization

Contextualization Continuum

David Hesselgrave, in his book "Communicating Christ Cross-culturally," has an interesting figure in called "The Contextualization Continuum."[6] Figure 13 shows a variant of that figure. Perhaps to be more accurate, it would be good to add another vertical arrow to the left of "Orthodoxy" (noting here that Orthodoxy is not referring to the Orthodox tradition of Christianity, but is to be understood in terms of

agreement to historical creeds) to describe "Schismatic" or "Particularistic " groups. After all, the orthodox view of Scripture has been that it is a product of both human and divine origin. As such, one must acknowledge that Scripture is embedded in culture. Interpretation then must be cognizant of both the culture in which Scripture is written, and the culture in which Scripture is being shared. However, some groups reject or at least minimize the idea that Scripture is embedded in culture, and that it must be interpreted in terms of culture. They presume a more supracultural Scripture. In practice that can affect both interpretation and application. They interpret passages without the lens of culture, and then universalize their interpretation's application. This leads to syncretism, since syncretism can come as equally from relativizing truth as absolutizing what should be considered relative.
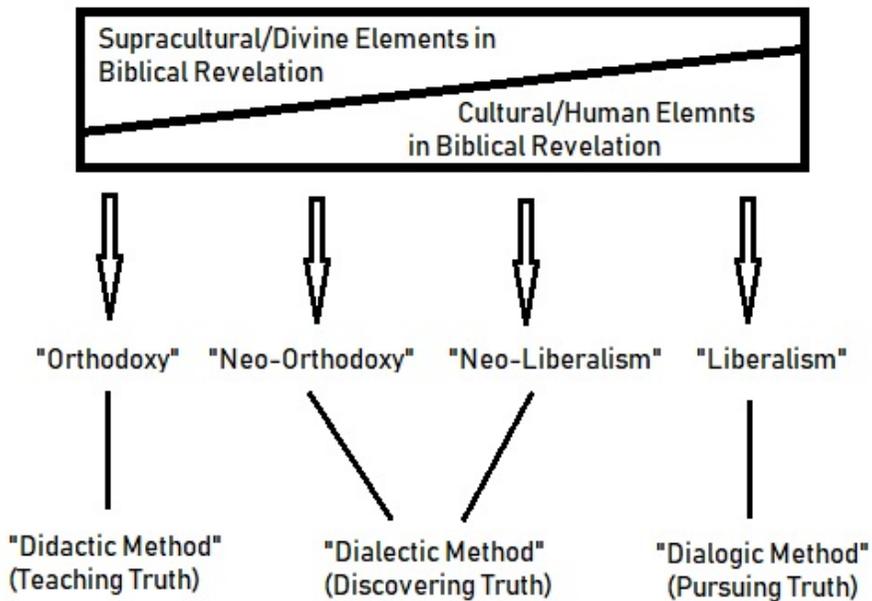
Figure 13. Contextualization Continuum

That being said, both the Schismatic groups and the 'Orthodox' groups could both be said to tend towards teaching (or "directed") contextualization[7] so one still ends up with the three same categories at the bottom of the figure. These three categories seem to line up well with three categories for Dialogue in Figure 5.
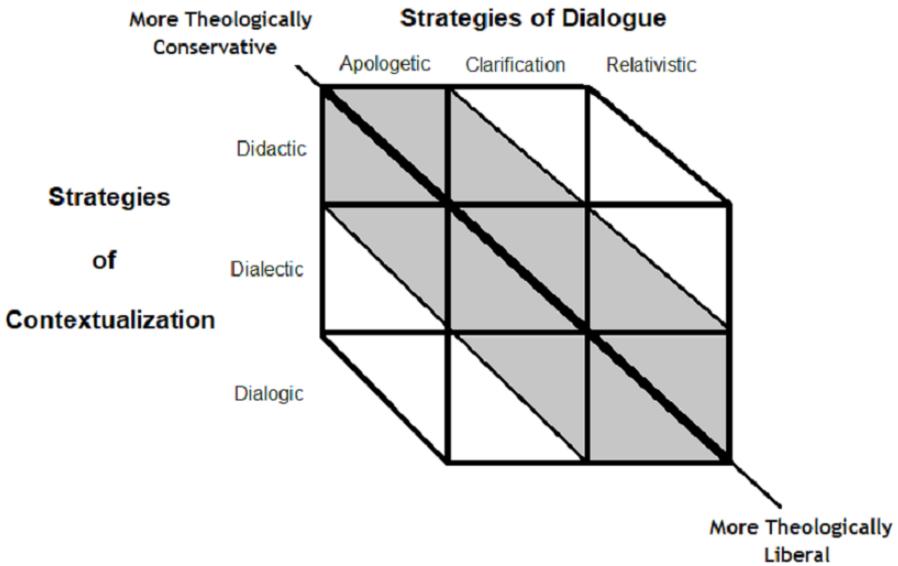
Figure 14. Relating Strategies of Contextualization and Dialogue

Figure 5 shows three categories of dialogue--- apologetic, clarification, and relativizing. The more exclusivistic tend toward the apologetic while the more pluralistic tend to be more relativizing. One can make the leap, although not always a well-founded leap, that exclusivistic groups tend towards what Hesselgrave is calling "Orthodox" and more pluralistic tends towards what he calls "Liberalism." If such a leap makes sense, one can bring Figures 5 and 12 together and come up with Figure 14.

Figure 14 has a diagonal line running from upper left to lower right. It shows a spectrum of theological positions from most conservative to most liberal. The gray region would be the more normative strategies associated with the theological perspective. The unshaded region would be less normative. Of course, the line shown for theological perspective doesn't truly exist. The range of theological perspectives do not fit comfortably on to a single thin line.

The more conservative theologically, the more likely that the contextualization strategy is Didactic (focusing on how to translate the Bible and Christian teachings into the language and thought patterns of

a target people). This contextualization would be driven more by the missionary, for example, than by the recipient people ("directed contextualization") There is also a greater likelihood to utilize an Apologetic strategy of dialogue, emphasizing argument as a way to share the Christian message.

Of course, that is not always true. For example, many Conservatives may choose a Clarification strategy for Dialogue believing that it could be a more successful strategy. It would, however, be quite unlikely for Conservatives to utilize a Relativistic strategy for Dialogue or a "Dialogic" strategy for Contextualization since both tend to minimize the uniqueness of Christian revelation.

At the other end, being more theologically liberal, a "Dialogic" strategy of Contextualization ("organic contextualization") and a Relativistic strategy for Dialogue would be more likely because of the tendency not to see Christian revelation as unique. That, however, is also not automatic.

For me, I support Clarification strategy for Dialogue. For Contextualization, since I tend towards a "Countercultural approach" of contextualization,[8] on this chart I suppose it is in the area close to where Didactic and Dialectic meet. That means I would be in the shaded area, as might be expected.

Jackson Wu has noted, as was also noted earlier in this book, that Non-Contextualization can also lead to syncretism.[9] In this case the syncretism is a mixing of the Christian Faith with the religious culture of the missionary, rather than the religious culture of the target population. Critical Contextualization (seeking a balance of openness to the newness and good of the target culture with the authority of Scripture) would then be centered on the Dialectical Contextualization but overlapping with the other two categories as well. Adding these things, we could come up with Figure 15. It shows the basic diagram but with Hiebert's categories of contextualization. Some unneeded lines are also removed.

For Figure 15, Hiebert's designations of contextualization are put on the right side. The black region is the region of Non-contextualization and the region of Uncritical contextualization. Both are areas where there is the risk of syncretism. Two complaints that can come up for this figure are worth addressing. The first is that Critical Contextualization is shown as such a large region, but reading Hiebert's article, where the terms were coined, it sounds like a rather

narrow strategy. This is valid. But for the purposes of illustrating it, the goal was to show that Critical Contextualization is centered on a Dialectic strategy for contextualization and a Clarification strategy for Dialogue. But that does not mean that other strategies could not also be part of it. Likewise, only the extremes of theology (extreme liberal or conservative) would necessarily be uncomfortable with Critical Contextualization.
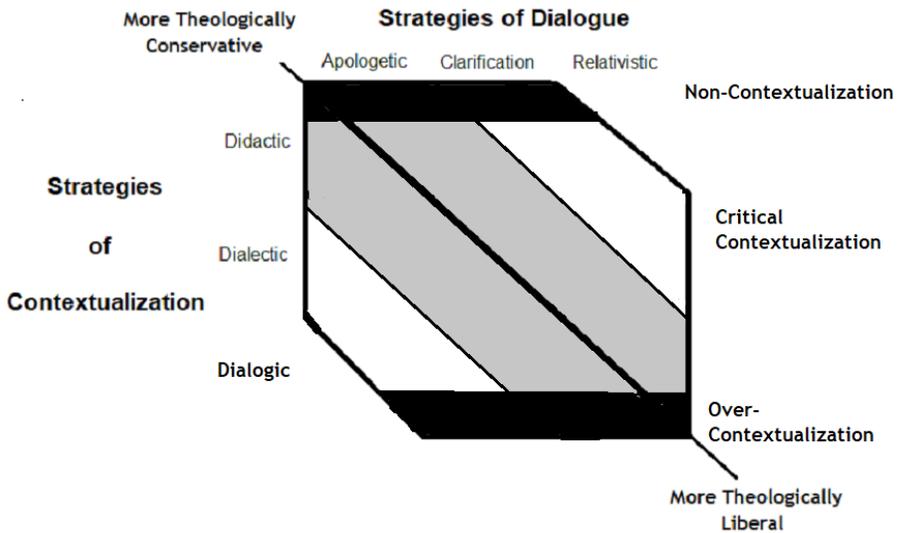

Figure 15. Critical Contextualization and Strategies

The other concern is the presumption that non-contextualization is a problem only for Conservatives. This concern is quite valid. Theologically liberal can also be non-contextualists. Conservatives have also been guilty of uncritical contextualizing (especially when mission strategy has become overly pragmatic). However, since syncretism is at both extremes on the theological spectrum, a theological liberal who practices non-contextualization and a theological conservative who practices uncritical contextualization are both still at risk of syncretism.

Conclusions

This section may have been too heavy for some, and not heavy enough for others. Those who are involved regularly with IRD should take the effort to more seriously investigate contextualization issues. For others, a basic openness to the idea that the goal of communicating is to be understood by the other, not merely to have spoken, is important. With that in mind, contextualization, along with the other six rules of Max Warren, will tend to help one be an effective communicator across religio-cultural boundaries.

Discussion

1. Titus 2:10 ends a section on how Christians should relate to others around them. It states that certain behaviors will "decorate" or "adorn" the gospel. The implication appears to be that our behavior can affect how people understand the Christian faith and message. What behaviors today may communicate our message better (or worse) to others?

2. Share a story of where you were greatly misunderstood because of a cultural (language, accent, cultural value, etc.) difference between you and the listener (or where you misunderstood someone communicating with you). How did it make you feel? Were you able to correct the problem? If so, how?

Chapter 12
But Isn't Dialogue a BAD Idea?

In some Christian circles there is an illustration that is shared, often in sermons. The illustration goes something like this.

> *In the US Treasury (or Canadian Treasury, or some other treasury) workers are taught to spot counterfeits in a fairly unique way. They are put into a big room full of money and are told to sort bills all day. After a certain number of days they are done and are put to regular work where one of their jobs is to spot counterfeits. Their training, as the story goes however, involves never dealing with any counterfeits. The logic is that if one becomes so comfortable with real money, that they will intuitively be able to recognize the fake.*

More on this particular illustration later.

Problems with Dialogue?

In earlier chapters some concerns regarding Dialogue were shared, but here seems like a good place to bring a few together.

1. It may lead a person to fall from the faith. It must be made clear, that this book is not dealing with the issue of eternal security. That is a very different book. This is simply addressing the issue of whether one can enter a dialogue describing oneself as a Christian, and leave the dialogue no longer doing so. The answer is, YES. It can happen and has happened.

To have healthy dialogue with a person of another faith, one should be confirmed in the faith and well-grounded in the faith. Moltmann described this as those who "merit dialogue." As quoted in chapter 5, "It is only if we are at home in our own religion that we shall be able to encounter the religion of someone else."[1] The first rule from Ten Rules for Interfaith Dialogue is, "Have a good grasp of your own religious tradition. You are trying to learn from them, but they will also want to know from you."[2]

So dialogue is not for everyone. But it is also not to be avoided. The goal is for every Christian to be competent and confident to speak of one's faith to someone of another faith. I Peter 3:15 states,

> *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"*

While the verse is written regarding discussing one's faith within the broader context of faithful suffering, it seems quite clear that the goal is that all Christians are able to speak gently and respectfully about their faith to others.

2. <u>We already know the truth.</u> Some believe that listening to those of other faiths simply opens our minds to lies and errors. That appears to be the purpose of the sermon illustration regarding counterfeit money that was shared at the beginning of this chapter.

The problem is that the story itself is a counterfeit. Treasury agents work with BOTH real and counterfeits in their training. Familiarity with real money is critical, but so is familiarity with counterfeits. The story is counterfeit, and so is the lesson. We, in fact, understand truth better in contrast. It is very hard to understand what air is, except through contrasting it with land and water. This is the basis of a saying, "If you want to know what water is like, do not ask a fish." The fish's lack of experience with things other than water make it a bad source for understanding what water is. If you want to know what water is, ask a duck, who has ample experience with land, water, and air.[4]

Additionally, if we accept the idea of the Missio Dei, that God is at work in all places and at all times, it is quite possible that we will learn

something about God from others. This may sound problematic, but returning to the story of Peter and Cornelius, we find a great example of how God taught something about Himself to the Apostle Peter, through a Roman Centurion, who as a God-fearer was essentially a Jewish-Pagan syncretist.

Very often when we learn something of value from a person of another religion, we are actually opening our eyes to something that God has already revealed in Scripture. For example, Taoism teaches, among other things, seeking harmony between the Human, the Divine, and the Creation. Many Christians haven't really looked at it that way, but rather focused on the idea that the Created world, is "fallen," temporary, and something that we are to use and even dominate. Much of this understanding is a lopsided interpretation of the Bible. God's command to have dominion over the earth should be understood in terms of a shepherd or gardener. Our understanding of dominion is sometimes guided more by 17th century rulership (the era of despots), than Biblical stewardship, and our understanding of creation is often more guided by Gnostic views of the lack of value of the material universe, than the Biblical understanding of creation as God's good, intentional design for His glory and our benefit. The fact is that Genesis 1 and 2 idealizes just that sort of harmony between God, Man, and Creation, and in the end, Paradise is restored with the return to that same harmony. As such, there is a certain amount of truth in this doctrine of Taoism that is also taught in the Bible... but sometimes we lose focus on it.

Sometimes God uses others to teach us or remind us.

3. It can lead to syncretism. This is true, and it may be intentional or unintentional. Many people like to "cherry pick" the most desirable doctrines of different groups to create their own comfortable faith.

However, syncretism happens regardless of whether one has dialogue or not. Recalling Figure 3 in a previous chapter on the subject of cultural separation. Avoiding conversation with others may lead to further separation from others ("Them") and closer alignment with "Us." However, there is no guarantee that means syncretism doesn't occur.

One form of syncretism that can occur is Ethnocentrism. This tends to happen when one only holds dialogue with one's cultural group, to the exclusion of other. In this context, a cultural group can be seen as delineated by racial, religious, economic, or other factors. Ethnocentrism is commonly based on monocultural background. Due

to very limited interaction to other groups, one assumes that one's own culture and beliefs are right and everyone else is wrong. Commonly when this happened, the person has a hard time knowing what is central to their own religion and what are cultural innovations. Thus when a missionary from culture A goes to culture B, they not only share the Gospel, but also share the style of worship they use in culture A, the clothes they wear, the music they listen to, the types of festivities they would join or would not join, and so forth. The Christian faith and the culture of the missionary have been mixed so that there are no clear lines of separation. This is a form of syncretism.

Another is Nationalism. This is related to Ethnocentrism, but still deserves special note. Throughout history, religion and national identity have been linked, to the point that the success of a nation was often viewed as success of one's God. Often the connection between religion and governance is so strong that one assumes that being part of one means being part of the other. Consider the quote of the Conquistador Pizarro to the Incan Emperor Atahualpa,

We come to conquer this land by his (the king of Spain) command, that all may come to a knowledge of God and of His Holy Catholic Faith; and by reason of our good mission, God, the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things in them, permits this, in order that you may know Him and come out from the bestial and diabolical life that you lead. It is for this reason that we, being so few in number, subjugate that vast host. When you have seen the errors in which you live, you will understand the good that we have done by coming to your land by order of his Majesty the King of Spain. Our Lord permitted that your pride should be brought low and that no Indian should be able to offend a Christian.'[3]

The message of this quote is that there is a strong link between state and church. God commands the king to conquer to lead people to God, and subjugate them to the king. Christians are not alone in this. Many Muslims see the militaristic expansion during the first few centuries of their faith as carrying out the will of Allah and the success they had during that period as evidence of divine favor.

An interesting example of this mixture of religion and nation is found in my home country, the United States. The melding of American civil

ideals, with Christian doctrine, and (curiously) a strong love for the military is often described as Americanism.

A friend of mine gave me a gift that typified this syncretistic belief system. My friend is not an Americanist, but still thought I would find the gift beneficial. I appreciate it much. The gift was a book titled "1599 Geneva Bible: Patriot's Edition."[4] On the cover is a picture of a painting of then Revolutionary General George Washington taking his military troops across the Delaware River to attack British/Hessian forces in Trenton, New Jersey during the American Revolutionary War. Inside is the Holy Bible. For me this is by far the most interesting thing, not only because it is God's Word, but that it is a 1599 version of the Geneva Bible (a very early English translation). However, it also has several other documents that are of interest to those who might describe themselves as "American Patriots." These include the Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence (from British colonial rule), Articles of Confederation, The Constitution of the United States, and Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior. While these other documents are interesting, and some may say even inspirational, there is something truly strange about placing them with Holy Bible, and then binding them together in a single volume described as "a Bible." Adding a military war action on the front, really takes the syncretism to a whole new level.

But this is what happens in Nationalism. In some places, such in China (with Maoism) and North Korea, the secular nationalism starts to take on strong religious aspects. In other places, such is in some Islamic countries, or in the United States, a syncretistic blending of governance and religion may form. In both Ethnocentrism and Nationalism, these types of syncretism do not form out of dialogue, but a lack of dialogue.

Related yet seemingly opposite to ethnocentrism is exoticism.[5] Sometimes a person becomes disenchanted with one's own culture or religion and begins to see a different one as better. Sometimes this leads to conversion, but often it leads to a partial incorporation of aspects of that culture or religion that can be syncretistic. A religious group may have serious problems, but looks appealing and 'perfect' from a distance. Both ethnocentrism and exoticism are based on a cultural or religious ignorance.

4. It is not Biblical-- Some believe that we are supposed to proclaim, not listen. An obvious, perhaps too obvious, response would be James 1:19

> *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,*

The verse applies to all Christians, and gives no limit on the circumstances so it could be argued that its application has to include interreligious dialogue. However, IRD was not context of this verse so, perhaps, it should not be used for that purpose.

In the broader Bible, however, there are many different ways in which believers interacted with unbelievers. There is no "one size fits all." This was shown in early chapters of this book. However, when one looks at Jesus, one finds Him having dialogue with those who are not His followers. Paul, we find was an observer and listener to those of other faiths. We find this most clearly in his visit to Athens where he observed the setting, and presented the Christian faith based on considerable understanding of local poetry, religion, and philosophy. Paul statement that he is a Jew to the Jew and a Greek to the Greeks does not simply express incarnational ministry, but more specifically his role as a learner, not just a teacher.

5. It is not Evangelistic. For Evangelicals, dialogue, with its focus on mutual understanding rather than on "winning souls," may seem to be anti-evangelistic. However, since dialogue often breaks down the barriers, or hindrances, to conversion, it often is more effective than methods that are more intentionally focused on conversion. While dialogue should never be, cynically, seen as a trick to evangelize, neither should it be seen as anti-evangelistic. More on this in the next chapter.

Discussion

1. Is there a tendency to confuse the Christian faith with one's own specific cultural, tribal, or national identity? How can one tell?

2. Read Acts 17. Note the differences between how Paul presented the Gospel in the synagogues of Thessalonica and Berea, and the Areopagus of Athens? Why were the presentations so different? What evidences are there in Paul's presentation in Athens that he was quite familiar with Athenian beliefs and practices? (Use a Biblical commentary if you need to.)

Chapter 13
IRD and Evangelism

A Story Related by One of my Students... *I am a pastor's son, and I help in my father's church, but I also have a secular job. One day a man came in to address some legal problems he had. We began talking about what can be done to resolve the problem. However, as we talked the man began to steer the conversation to issues of faith. It soon was revealed that he was a member of a different religion. He began to share with me from the Bible as to why I should convert to his religion. (The man's religion is a particularistic group that also honors the Bible.)*

"Ahh," I thought to myself. "This man does not know who he is dealing with." I launched into rapid fire quoting of verses that undermined the man's faith positions, and supported my own. What started out as a simple manner of business grew into a heated argument about faith. Finally, the man had enough. He stopped talking, stood up and walked angrily out of my office.

I thought to myself, "Well, I sure showed him!" I was quite proud of myself. I don't normally argue with people about religion, but I must say that I was quite good at it. It felt great to defend the faith so well.

That evening, I went home, and we had family Bible time. We each shared about our day. I could hardly wait to tell my family about my encounter with the man. When done with my story, my father looked rather sad.

He asked, "So do you think this man will ever come back?"

"No," I replied. "I think that he knows better than to do that."

"That is so sad," commented my father. "It was a missed opportunity to reach a lost soul."

I have thought about his comment ever since. I believe that I took an opportunity to express God's love and compassion and turned it into a competition.

Dialogue as a Tool for Evangelism?

Lesslie Newbigin stated,

"The purpose of dialogue for the Christian is obedient witness to Jesus Christ who is not the property of the Church but is rather the Lord of the Church… In this encounter the Church is changed and the world is changed and Christ is glorified."[1]

The San Antonio Conference on World Mission and Evangelism provided the following statement,

"We affirm that witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it."[2]

Evangelical Christians have sometimes balked at dialogue because it is seen in contrast to evangelism. Dialogue has often been portrayed as non-evangelistic or even anti-evangelistic. Even looking in chapter one of this book, dialogue is portrayed as seeking mutual understanding rather than seeking change. Since evangelism has the goal of changing heart and mind, it seems that the concerns of Evangelicals are valid.

In most conversations, creating understanding may be a main purpose, but rarely is it an ultimate end. Consider the Apologists from the early centuries of the church. They were seeking to correct the misunderstanding of Roman rulers regarding Christianity. The apologists sought to demonstrate that Christianity was ethically commendable, and that Christians were, in fact, good Roman citizens. The development of this understanding was not the ultimate goal--- but

a first step. The hope was that persecution of Christians would end.

Even those who may view dialogue more in line with the relativizing end of the spectrum still would likely have motives that go beyond discovering that we share much in common. They, typically, also seek to reduce conflict between different religious or cultural blocs.

But would it be appropriate for Christians to hold dialogue with those of other faiths with the hope that, ultimately, these people would convert to Christianity? If Christianity is more than just one of many ways to seek God or the divine--- if Christianity is understood to be unique--- then it is quite reasonable for Christians to have a vested interest in others following Christ. With this perspective, dialogue would then be done for mutual understanding, but still with a secondary, or perhaps ultimate, goal of changing the mind of the other.

But a very real question is whether dialogue is an appropriate or effective tool in evangelization. Earlier on in this book, it was noted that the apologetic or debate approach is commonly not effective because it tends to drive people apart more often then draw them together. Additionally, at the other end of the perspective, it was noted that because there is a relativization of belief, seeing all faiths as being different facets of the same gem, it is hard to see how this would draw people to the Christian faith, beyond perhaps superficial allegiance.

Clarification Dialogue, creating mutual understanding, is NOT, strictly speaking, an evangelization method. In fact a common key guideline to IRD is NOT to proselytize, or speak with mixed or deceptive motives. Dialogue, however, can establish a better foundation, from which evangelism can take place.

It is worth taking a minute to think about this. Is it possible to use dialogue to share one's faith when one is also not trying to proselytize? Simply saying that one is not trying to convert another is not enough. Years ago I was speaking with a Jewish friend and began speaking about the Christian faith. A few seconds in I told him "... now I am not trying to convert you or anything." He jumped in and said, "That's pretty much what every Christian who tries to convert me says." That got me thinking. Adding a little disclaimer on to a very overt evangelistic message does not undo the clear intention of the conversation. It does, however, draw into question the integrity of the Christian.

Two Stories and One Illustration and a Third Story

To address the question of how one can use dialogue as part of evangelizing when pretty much all guidance on dialogue is that it is not for that purpose, consider the following stories and illustrations.

Story #1.   I have a friend who is an MBB (Muslim Background Believer). He was raised as a Muslim in a predominantly Muslim country. When he was an adult, he worked at a company in a different predominantly Muslim country. He worked for his boss for many months without incident. One day, however, his boss was heading out with some of his friends at lunchtime. His boss said to my friend, "We are going to go study the Bible during our lunch break. Would you like to join us?"

According to my friend, he immediately joined and some time later decided to follow Christ. Talking to my friend, he explained the event. He said, "I had a deep respect for my boss. He was honest and fair. I was happy to work for him. I did not join the Bible study because I felt any sort of pressure to join, because I knew my boss was not like that. I also did not join because I had a great deal of interest in the Bible. Frankly, I joined because of who my boss was. I had great respect for him, and would have said 'Yes' to whatever he suggested because I knew it would be good, and most likely be good for me."

Story #2.   I worked with a friend who was part of a Particularistic Christian group. That is, they believed that one would have to be a member of that specific denomination to be saved. Within days of meeting someone at work he would find a reason to strike up a conversation that was meant to lead toward getting that person to join his group.

The problem was that he had a bit of a bad reputation at work. That bad reputation was not so much because of his proselytizing--- something that was looked at more with humor than annoyance. Rather, the issue was that he was deemed a bit lazy. He complained about workloads and looked for opportunities to get out of tasks. Curiously, there were people at work who wondered if he was a drug runner. They felt that he maintained a lifestyle that was beyond the pay he received. He also lived on a piece of land that was secluded and located near a major drug corridor in the state. These people thought

his rather intense religious fervor was meant to disguise his real business. I doubt that the rumor was true. Certainly the depth of his knowledge in the doctrines of his group went beyond what one would normally do to establish a disguise.

After a couple of years, the company laid him off because of his unreliability on the job. Some months after that he contacted me saying that he has started his own business and wanted to know if I wanted to join him. I had to decline. In the end, it was not a matter of religion--- it was a matter of trust.

Illustration #2. Primer

Living here in the Philippines I have had the opportunity to see a fair bit of construction. I have seen some good things, not so good things, and some desperately dangerous things. I suppose painting qualifies as one of those "not so good things."

I have seen a practice on more than one occasion, and have seen the results far more often. I see a painted surface, perhaps a door, with the paint peeling off. It is peeling not because of heat or chemicals or age, but because there is nothing holding it to the surface underneath. Literally, I have seen a painted surface that looked great. But when it was scuffed, the outer coat peeled away revealing a glossy layer of paint of a different color. Most people would know what happened. The under surface was not prepared, and no primer was used.

A primer has adhesive properties so that it bonds between the outer paint and the base material or underlayer. It also adds protection to the base material, especially since such materials may be prone to rotting or oxidation.

Primer gives depth to paint by connecting it to the base material rather than simply laying upon it.

Imagine dialogue is a primer. It provides the connection between the message and the person. There are cultural and personal aspects of the individual that makes the message have a tendency to "not stick." An evangelist cannot make a person follow Christ, but can remove natural (psychological, sociological, cultural) barriers.

Story #3. Grape Vendors

A few years ago, I was teaching a short-course on doing Ethnographies. I asked the class to break up into groups and then interview some micro-cultures. I gave each group the instruction:

>"Do not share the gospel with your informants."

Asked why, I said, "Your job is to listen, not to talk. You may be tempted to talk, but your job is to listen, and to learn. If you feel the need to evangelize, do it tomorrow. Today, you listen."

One of the groups went and spoke with fruit peddlers in the city park. They had very good conversations with several peddlers I won't address the details here. However, one of the women who was selling grapes began to ask some questions about them and what they believed. My students told me that they fought the urge to share the gospel message and just stuck to the interview.

These were missionaries, so it was definitely a struggle for them. I can understand that. From a missionary standpoint, their failure to respond to a clear opportunity to share their faith would seem like a failure to obey their ministerial call as well as the Great Commission.

And maybe they are right. It certainly got me thinking. Maybe I should be careful about how dogmatic my guidance is. After all, in qualitative analysis there are few hard and fast rules.

On the other hand, I could have been right. Ministers often fail to reach people because they fail to take time to be "watching, listening, and learning."[3] Often ministers feel that they already know enough and it is time to talk. Yet commonly they are wrong. Wisdom is tied to knowing when to teach and when to learn.

Anyway, you can decide for yourself.

Putting these above stories (and illustration) together, a few things come up.

<u>Sharing faith is often very relational.</u> Many won't respond until there is a positive relationship between the Christian and the other. Such a positive relationship does not occur without communication. Communication that is driven primarily by polemics or argument is unlikely to develop a type of relationship where the Gospel connects to

both heart and mind. Dialogue is a good starting point to a good relationship.

Sharing faith is tied to behavior. Bad behavior is louder than good doctrine. In cross-cultural settings, good behavior may be bad behavior in a different setting. It is important to listen and learn to know what is proper to break down barriers, as opposed to making the barriers higher or even insurmountable.

The Gospel doesn't always "stick" to the person, much like paint doesn't always stick to the surface it is put on. If the Gospel is presented as something that "itches where it does not scratch," addressing issues that seem foreign or uninteresting to the hearer, it is likely the message will not be valued. (Of course, this does not deny Max Warren's guidance that God is in the conversation, and the Spirit of God is at work through the conversation and after. This truth doesn't excuse poor presentation of the gospel message.) The Gospel is broadly transformative addressing issues of fear, guilt, and shame (among others) so understanding the other is needed and this comes through listening and observing--- through learning.

Sharing faith is a matter of timing. Some are quick to "pull the trigger" rather than to learn and listen first. Essentially, they would prefer to guess what the other person hopes for or fears. On the other hand, perhaps they have only learned one presentation of the Gospel so they apply what is sometimes called the "Bigger Hammer Theory." The Bigger Hammer Theory is that 'anything can be solved with a big hammer.' In the case of evangelism. If the one presentation of the gospel doesn't seem to be working, press harder, and longer, not taking NO for an answer. While it is true that many fail in the opposite extreme (I will share my faith some day... meaning never), such over caution does not imply the value of no caution or no patience.

"I Peter 3:15" Evangelism

> *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," 1 Peter 3:15*

Earlier, this verse was quoted. While specifically focusing on how to respond to persecutors, it seems as if it can be applied more broadly to evangelism. If it is reasonable to view this verse in this manner, then a few points would seem relevant.

- We are to live godly lives (internally and externally)--- where Christ is Lord.

- We are to be well-grounded in our faith and our hope in Christ.

- When asked about our faith, we share it, but in a manner that is typified by gentleness and respect.

So where does dialogue fit into this? First, evangelism doesn't start with "cold-call" proclamation, but a loving godly interaction. Second, evangelism, in terms of formal presentation of the Gospel message, is initiated by the non-Christian, not the Christian. Third, there must be cultural sensitivity to effectively express with gentleness and respect.

Bringing these all together, one can say that dialogue is NOT an evangelism method. However, it establishes a foundation from which evangelism may occur. That is because it:

- Breaks down animosities and other barriers that can hinder receptivity.

- Establishes a clearer understanding of similarities and differences so that confusion or miscommunication is reduced.

- Provides a clearer understanding of how the Gospel may be interpreted so that it can be seen as relevant to the situation of the other.

There is, however, an important caveat. One of the guidelines commonly given for IRD is that it is done without deception or false motives. In other words, IRD should not be thought of as a "trick" to lead people to Christ--- some sort of "bait and switch" scheme. Rather, it should be seen as a thing of value in itself. For example, going back to I Peter 3:15, the passage does not say that we are to revere in our hearts Christ as Lord SO THAT people will ask us to answer as to the reason of the hope that is in us. Our revering Christ as Lord in our hearts is an end unto itself. It is out of that situation, that firm foundation, one can be ready for questions (and in the context of the passage, persecution).

Another Story

Recently, a student in an Interreligious Dialogue class, developed a conversation with a person from his home country of a different faith. That other person was very cautious but the student made it very clear that he just wanted to talk, not try to argue or pressure the other to do anything. Over time, they developed a friendship and they began to be comfortable in talking about their faith. Eventually the friend of the student did decide to become a Christian. Was dialogue and friendship used as a ploy, a deception, to get the person to convert? I don't believe so. Certainly the student wanted the other person to convert. But the dialogue and friendship was the clear first goal, with no certainty where things would go from there.

That being said, the student recognized that his fellow countryman would never have responded to the gospel of Christ if presented as he would normally do it. The other was extremely leery of such direct approaches. However, from a foundation of friendship and trust, they were comfortable to speak of their own respective beliefs, and the other felt safe to seek to know more about the student's faith.

There is no certainty that conversion will occur from dialogue. In fact, it would be safe to say that this is the minority result. St. Francis of Assisi was not able to change the mind of the Sultan in Egypt, but he did reduce in some small way the great animosity between Muslims and Christians in that part of the world during the time of the Crusades. That should not be thought a failure any more than it would be a failure if a Christian demonstrates kindness to his neighbor, but the neighbor does not reciprocate in kind.

Discussion

1. Many evangelistic methods presume that the potential respondent already has a Christian worldview. For example, "The Roman's Road" starts from the presumption that the hearer already agrees as to the authority of the Bible, and shares a common understanding of such terms as "Jesus," "God," and "sin." Related to this, I have heard people say, "Oh, _____ never (or rarely) respond to the Gospel.' Maybe you have heard this too.

   If you have, could it be that the Gospel is presented in a way that doesn't make sense to the hearer?

   Could this attitude become a self-fulfilling prophecy? Could the belief that evangelism doesn't "work" for a certain group lead people not to try, and not seek to understand people in that group?

2. Read up on St. Francis of Assisi's conversation with Sultan al Kamil. See Footnote #9 for Chapter 3 for one place one can read an account of this encounter.

   Was the visit valuable or a waste of time? Why?

CHAPTER 14
PRACTICING DIALOGUE

Thom went to the center of town from seminary. He had a class assignment to have a dialogue with a person from a different world religion. He decided to go to one of the Muslim vendors who sells near the plaza. He went to the table that was set up and bought a small item. As he began to speak , Thom said that he was from Myanmar.

"Hoy!!" said the man suddenly, and waved over some other Muslim vendors. They began speaking rapidly in a language that Thom could not understand. It was clear they were pretty angry about something Finally, one spoke.

"Your people persecute and abuse us!" They were referring to the abuses suffered by the Rohingya Muslim minority group who have been persecuted by the Myanmar government. Thom explained that he is sad about the way that the Rohingya are mistreated and further went on to explain that he himself is from a Christian minority group in Myanmar that also has a history of being persecuted by the government.

Things calmed down, but it was certainly a challenging way to start a dialogue.

Practice does not make perfect. Practicing writing in the hopes of becoming a better speller may not work. In fact, the repetition of misspelled words may actually lead one to be more confirmed in one's errors. One becomes better at dialogue by both practicing it, and establishing a system to review, analyze, and grow through the dialogue.

In clinical pastoral training, case studies are used to analyze interactions, and in those studies one utilizes theological reflection and small group interaction. It is a form of Praxis Theological Reflection, or Action-Reflection.
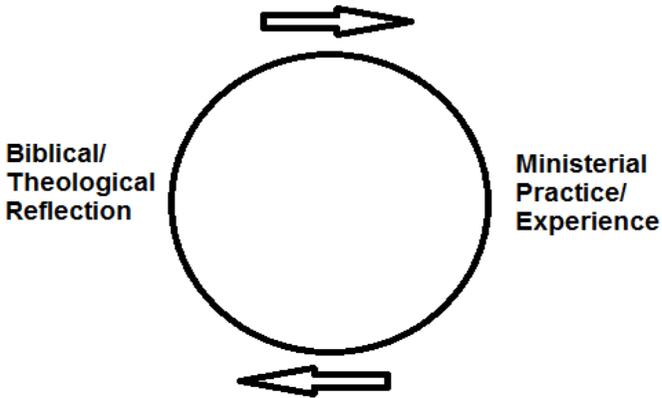

Figure 16. Action-Reflection

Action-Reflection is pretty simple. Figure 16 shows it. Ministerial practice or experience in the context of this book is Dialogue with another person. This dialogue then goes through a reflection. Such a reflection can simply be personal and unstructured. However, when possible, it is recommended to utilize a more structured process that utilizes others. The components of reflection are.

- The minister thinks about the conversation and writes down the conversation (or a part of it) on paper following the format of a case study. The case study has reflective questions for the person to consider and write down.

- The minister shares the case to a group of peers (typically the group would be 3-7 members). These should be trustworthy and have competence in terms of faith and dialogue.

- The group will seek clarification, ask question, and give insights regarding aspects of the case.

- Based on this small group dialogue, the minister will amend his/her reflections, and come up with conclusions as to new

theological insights, and changes to make in terms of behavior in the future. (Such new insights may also involve a certain amount of self-discovery.)

The reflection should guide future action, and that action should lead to new reflections.

The peer reflection is important. People have blind spots. One place where blind spots are especially prominent is In conversation. We don't hear ourselves or see ourselves, we hear and see what fits our self-perception. In fact, one of the purposes for conversation is to reduce blindspots.

Appendix E provides one format that could be used.

Johari Window[1]

The Johari Window is an image used to explain self-understanding.
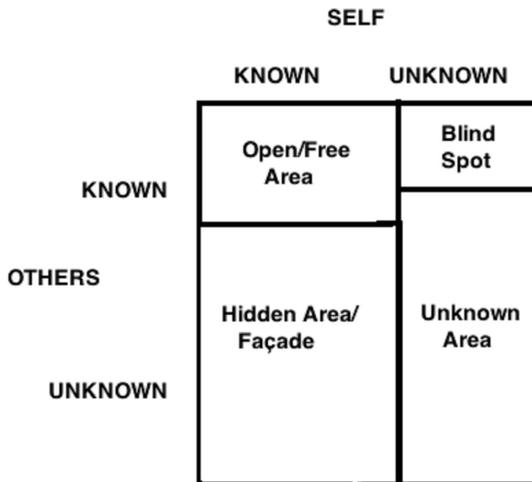
Figure 17. Johari Window

It shows a "window" that has four "panes." The four panes may be of different sizes but constitute the overall window as shown in Figure 17. Each person has four aspects of his or her life. One pane describes

that area that is known both by oneself and by others, called the "Open Area." At the other extreme is that area that is unknown by oneself and by others. This is the unknown area. There is an area that is known by the oneself but unknown to others. This is the hidden area--- the aspects of ourselves that we hide from others. Finally, there is that area that is known by others, but each of us are personally blinded to. This is the "blind spot."

A psychoemotionally healthy person is self-aware. By this is meant that he or she has a good understanding of self. That is, he/she has relatively small blind spot and unknown area. Such a person would not only tend to be psychoemotionally more healthy, but he or she is likely to have healthier relationships.

So how do we accomplish this? The answer is two-fold. The first is ASK QUESTIONS of others about ourselves (and listen to the answers). This makes the area of self-delusion or personal blind spot smaller. The other is SELF-DISCLOSURE (or telling others). This helps remove the false masks that we put up to hide our true selves from others. On the Johari Window, if we make the blind spot and the hidden area smaller, then the open area becomes larger. (We don't know about the "unknown area" because it is, well, unknown. However, this pattern of self-discovery would gradually reduce the unknown.)

So what does this have to do with case presentation? One brings a case to a group. That case not only has the dialogue in it, it also has personal reflections and insights. Presenting it to the group is an act of (sometimes scary) self-disclosure. The presenter than invites response. The group ask questions, seek clarification, and provide person insights. This iterative process of analysis provides two great things:

- It helps the person understand him or herself better as a person and as a minister.

- It helps to improve as a practitioner of IRD.

Confidentiality

Sometimes it seems so obvious that confidentiality is important in case presentations that it need not be mentioned. Alas, that seems just not so. Even after being warned, people commonly present cases with the actual name of the person, and/or especially detailed personal information given. Why is this? Perhaps the presenter is afraid that

giving only generic information that cannot be verified makes it look like the dialogue was manufactured. The danger of a contrived dialogue is much less serious, however, than breaking confidence. People who talk to us want to know that they are not exposing themselves to ridicule, or nosy kibitzers. With that in mind, a few obvious guidelines should be given.

- Don't use their real name. Make up a name, or use initials. If the initials may reveal the person, make up the initials.

- Change specific information that may "give away" the identity. If you spoke with a woman from Uruguay, and there is only one woman from Uruguay in your community, not using her name has not protected her identity. Describe her as being from some other country-- maybe Lebanon-- as long as such a change doesn't make the conversation or setting nonsensical.

- Have a confidentiality pact (having such a pact signed is really not a bad idea) not to reveal cases or what is discussed in the group. They need to know that sharing "exciting happy news" outside of the group is just as much a breaking of confidence as sharing embarrassing facts. Consider the story in the discussion section (#2) as relevant here.

- When there may be a reason to break confidence, do it properly. Take for example, Appendix C. In it, I shared a conversation between two people. The Christian, had asked the Buddhist if he could write down and publish the conversation. The Buddhist agreed. The Christian still removed information from the conversation that might identify the person. I, in part, also wanted to use part of the conversation. I asked permission from the writer to use it, and asked permission to use his name (in the footnoting).

- Usually, the dialogue should not be video or audio recorded. If there is a reason for it to be done, proper permissions should be gotten. Refusal on the part of the other should be gratiously accepted. There should be NO coercion involved. (Normally, except where written text is the medium of exchange, it is not recommended to audio record, video record, or take notes during the conversation.)

Confidentiality is important in all settings. However, as the circumstances are potentially more formal or public, the more

important that proper protocols are followed (including signed permissions).

Discussion

1. Try out a dialogue with a person of a different faith. After the conversation write down PART of the dialogue verbatim (following a form similar to found in Appendix C, utilizing the overall format similar to that found in Appendix E. Share the case in a mature, confidential, supportive setting for consult. Ideally, everyone in the group presents a case. (A group should be perhaps 4-7 people, and each presentation and discussion should take close to 1 hour)

   .

2. Consider the following story. A teenage girl (who is from a Muslim family) was living with others so that she could attend a quality school in a different city. In school, she made friends with a Christian girl who, after a time, invited her to attend her church's youth group. She accepted the invitation and began participating in the group. After a time, she decided to identify herself as a Christian. The youth group was quite excited by this, and began sharing this all over social media. Not surprising all of this eventually got back to the teenager, who was mortified that a deeply personal decision was put up on the Web for everyone to see (without her permission). Her family also found out about this and was quite angry with her, and the youth group. The teenager, in turn, lashed out at the group, believing that they did not care about her, but were just wanting to add another mark on their evangelism scorecard.

   This story describes a breach of confidentiality (although not a classic dialogue group).

   Were the teenager's concerns/accusations valid?

   Could things have been done better?

Conclusions

A friend of mine told me this story. She was standing in line for check-out at a grocery store. Two ladies were right behind her. Their looks made it quite likely that they were part of a schismatic and particularistic group (meaning a group that comes from Christianity but diverges in many ways from historic Christianity, and sees salvation as mediated through their religious organization). They started talking to my friend and did indeed confirm that they were from that group. They asked if my friend was Roman Catholic. My friend said that she was raised up Roman Catholic, but was now a part of an Evangelical Christian group.

Upon hearing this, the two ladies speaking to my friend started talking about how bad Catholicism is and how hypocritical Catholics are, and so forth. They spoke to my friend in a conspiratorial manner as if the three of them were sharing a common frustration. My friend however, stopped them when she said,

"Oh no. I am very happy I was raised Roman Catholic. It is through the Catholic church that I learned about God. I learned about Jesus. I learned about God's love for me and how I can be with Him. Even though I don't call myself a Catholic now, I am happy I was raised Roman Catholic."

The conversation pretty much died at that point.

As noted at the beginning of this book, dialogue is portrayed as a tool. Like any tool, one has to have the tool, know how to use it, and know when to use it. A hammer used to drive a nail is quite effective. A hammer used to cut wood will be messy at best. A hammer used in violence against a human being can be deadly.

Dialogue, like humor, can be used to heal, or to harm. In the story at the beginning of this chapter, dialogue was being used to divide. The two ladies on one side of the dialogue were trying to use the presumption of animosity between my friend's present church and her former church to fuel more animosity. One might guess that the two were seeking to make my friend feel that the three of them were on the same side by creating a common enemy. One might further guess that their motivation to do that was not so much a "common ground" approach, but rather an early step in proselytization (since the group is particularistic). While not inherently wrong, this certainly is a somewhat abusive use of dialogue. Far too many Christians find the inclination to "throw rocks" at other traditions within Christianity almost impossible to resist (to say nothing of other non-Christian religions). That inclination is very wrong, and to use dialogue to feed wrong behavior and attitudes is also wrong. It is good that my friend squelched it with... gratitude.

Interreligious dialogue is meant to be a tool to increase understanding between different faiths. Going all the way back to Chapter One, IRD should help the participants

- **Understand each other better.**
- **Have greater insight of the other.**
- **Reduce social distance.**

When dialogue doesn't do these, it is the wrong tool for the right goal., or perhaps the wrong tool for the wrong goal.

You probably have noted an awkward tension in the book. Dialogue is presented as a way of clarifying agreements and disagreements between those of different faiths. In so doing, they are working together on this, not in conflict and not involved in proselytizing. At the same time, dialogue is presented as a foundational position for sharing one's faith. .This book allows these two ideas to exist in tension. The reader is encouraged to struggle with this tension creatively.

My prayer is that this brief book helps you think about some of these issues regarding different religions, and dialogue with adherents to these different faiths. Ultimately, I pray that this will lead you to have this tool, know how to use it, and know when to use it.

Appendix A

Patriarch Timothy and the Caliph[1]

A document from the early church is titled, "***The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi.***" The date of the document is approximately 780AD. Timothy served as a Patriarch of the Eastern church when much of its territory was under Muslim rule. This document purports to describe a conversation between Timothy and the Muslim ruler of the Caliphate. It has similarity with the Book of Daniel in that it has a follower of God who is a respected man, but still a servant under a ruler of a different faith. In line with that, both Daniel and Timothy use language that is very respectful, and utilizes culturally appropriate language, such as "O King, live forever," by Daniel, and "Our Victorious King" by Timothy. The difference is that the rulers in Daniel were seemingly a bit ambivalent about the beliefs of Daniel and themselves, while the Caliph seemed to be very interested in Timothy's beliefs, while still quite invested in his own beliefs.

Here is an excerpt from this document:

> And our victorious King said: "In this matter you believe more rightly than the others. Who dares to assert that God dies? I think that even demons do not say such a thing. In what, however, you say concerning one Word and Son of God, all of you are wrong."— And I replied to his Majesty: "O our victorious King, in this world we are all of us as in a dark house in the middle of the night. If at night and in a dark house a precious pearl happens to fall in the midst of people, and all become aware of its existence, every one would strive to pick up the pearl, which will not fall to the lot of all but to the lot of one only, while one will get hold of the pearl itself, another one of a piece of glass, a third one of a stone or of a bit of earth, but every one will be

happy and proud that he is the real possessor of the pearl. When, however, night and darkness disappear, and light and day arise, then every one of those men who had believed that they had the pearl, would extend and stretch his hand towards the light, which alone can show what every one has in hand. He who possesses the pearl will rejoice and be happy and pleased with it, while those who had in hand pieces of glass and bits of stone only will weep and be sad, and will sigh and shed tears.

"In this same way we children of men are in this perishable world as in darkness. The pearl of the true faith fell in the midst of all of us, and it is undoubtedly in the hand of one of us, while all of us believe that we possess the precious object. In the world to come, however, the darkness of mortality passes, and the fog of ignorance dissolves, since it is the true and the real light to which the fog of ignorance is absolutely foreign. In it the possessors of the pearl will rejoice, be happy and pleased, and the possessors of mere pieces of stone will weep, sigh, and shed tears, as we said above."

And our victorious King said: "The possessors of the pearl are not known in this world, O Catholicos."—And I answered: "They are partially known, O our victorious King."—And our victorious and very wise King said: "What do you mean by partially known, and by what are they known as such?"—And I answered: "By good works, O our victorious King, and pious deeds, and by the wonders and miracles that God performs through those who possess the true faith. As the luster of a pearl is somewhat visible even in the darkness of the night, so also the rays of the true faith shine to some extent even in the darkness and the fog of the present world. God indeed has not left the pure pearl of the faith completely without testimony and evidence, first in the prophets and then in the Gospel. He first confirmed the true faith in Him through Moses, once by means of the prodigies and miracles that He wrought in Egypt, and another time when He divided the waters of the Red Sea

into two and allowed the Israelites to cross it safely, but drowned the Egyptians in its depths. He also split and divided the Jordan into two through Joshua, son of Nun, and allowed the Israelites to cross it without any harm to themselves, and tied the sun and the moon to their own places until the Jewish people were well avenged upon their enemies. He acted in the same way through the prophets who rose in different generations, viz.: through David, Elijah, and Elisha.

"Afterwards He confirmed the faith through Christ our Lord by the miracles and prodigies which He wrought for the help of the children of men. In this way the Disciples performed miracles greater even than those wrought by Christ. These signs, miracles, and prodigies wrought in the name of Jesus Christ are the bright rays and the shining luster of the precious pearl of the faith, and it is by the brightness of such rays that the possessors of this pearl which is so full of luster and so precious that it outweighs all the world in the balance, are known."

And our victorious King said: "We have hope in God that we are the possessors of this pearl, and that we hold it in our hands."— And I replied: "Amen, O King. But may God grant us that we too may share it with you, and rejoice in the shining and beaming luster of the pearl! God has placed the pearl of His faith before all of us like the shining rays of the sun, and every one who wishes can enjoy the light of the sun.

This section has Timothy's telling of the Parable of the Lost Pearl. This is not a story from the Bible. Rather it expresses what Timothy and the Caliph are experiencing. God has sought to reveal Himself to all people, but the Deceiver seeks to bring confusion. Out of this, each grabs hold of what they believe is the truth, Each expresses confidence that he is correct and the other is incorrect. However, in the end, it is only God who knows the absolute truth and will one day reveal what is true and what is false.

Appendix B

Handsome Lake and the Longhouse Religion[1]

Handsome Lake (1735-1815) was a religious reformer among the Iroquois, a group of Native American tribes based, primarily in present-day New York State. In his younger years he struggled with alcoholism. Later, he had a religious experience that changed his life. Out of that experience were a series of visions from "messengers" of the Creator, that he collected as a "Code."

It attempted to provide simplified but strict moral code for all members of the Iroquois Nation. It also contained some prophecies. For example, Handsome Lake believed the world would end by fire in 2100 AD.

In his first vision, three messengers informed him of the danger of alcoholism, as well as witchcraft. Handsome Lake taught that there is one Creator God, and he has created a Heaven World for the good. For those who are evil, there is the House of the Wicked One. From his teaching and the Code, came the Longhouse Religion, a religion that is practiced to this day.

The following are some excerpts from the Code of Handsome Lake:

> "'Now the Creator of mankind ordained that people should live to an old age. He appointed that when a woman becomes old she should be without strength and unable to work. Now the Creator says that it is a great wrong to be unkind to our grandmothers. The Creator forbids unkindness to the old. We, the messengers, say it. The Creator appointed this way: he designed that an old woman should be as a child again and when she becomes so the Creator wishes the grandchildren to help her, for only because she is, they are. Whosoever does right to the aged does right in the sight of the Creator.'"

"'When a woman hears children playing near her lodge she must call them in and ask them to eat. The Creator says that this is right for some children are of poor parents and have little to eat. The Creator loves poor children and whosoever feeds the poor and unfortunate does right before him.'"

"'When a woman sees an unfortunate girl who has neither parents nor settled home and calls her in and helps her repair her clothing, cleanse herself and comb her hair, she does right and has favor in the sight of her Creator. He loves the poor and the woman does right before him. So we, the messengers, say that you must tell your people to continue to do this good thing.'"

"'There is a dispute in the heaven-world between two parties. It is a controversy about you, the children of earth. Two great beings are disputing--one is the Great Ruler, the Creator, and the other is the evil-minded spirit.

"'You who are on earth do not know the things of heaven.

"'Now the evil one said, "I am the ruler of the earth because when I command I speak but once and man obeys."

"'Then answered the Great Ruler, "The earth is mine for I have created it and you have helped me in no part."

"'Now the evil one answered, "I do not acknowledge that you have created the earth and that I helped in no part, but I say that when I say to men, 'Obey me,' they straightway obey, but they do not hear your voice."

"'Then the Great Ruler replied, "Truly the children are my own for they have never done evil."

"'And the evil one answering said, "Nay, the children are

mine for when I bid one saying, 'Pick up that stick and strike your fellow,' they obey me quickly. Aye, the children are mine."

"'Then was the Great Ruler very sad and he said, "Once more will I send my messengers and tell them my heart and they will tell my people and thus I will redeem my own."

"'Then the evil one replied, "Even so it will not be long before men transgress your commands. I can destroy it with a word for they will do my bidding. Verily I delight in the name Hanîsse:'ono the Ruler of Mankind. It is very true that they who love my name, though they be on the other side of the earth, will find me at their backs the moment they pronounce my name."

"'Now at that time the Great Ruler spoke to the four messengers saying, "Go tell mankind that at present they must not call me Hawi'n'io`, the Great Ruler, until a later time, for the Evil One calls himself the Ruler of Mankind. So now whosoever is turned into my way must say when he calls upon my name, Hodiänok'doo^n Hêd'iohe? our Creator. So also whosoever speaks the name of the evil one must say, Segoewa'tha, The Tormentor. Then will the evil one know that you have discovered who he is, for it is he who will punish the wicked when they depart from this world.'"

Appendix C

Example Dialogue in Myanmar Buddhist Context [1]

The following is an excerpt of a dialogue between a Christian from a minority group in Myanmar, and a Theravada Buddhist of (the majority) Burmese ethnicity, also from Myanmar. The Buddhist, a woman in her mid-40s is a widow with four children. The dialogue was meant to be evangelistic in purpose and low-pressure in tone. The letter "C" refers to the Christian speaker, and "B" to the Buddhist speaker. The conversation was translated into English.

Some of the language sounds a bit unnatural, but that comes from the translation. There are people who are skilled at translating smoothly, but I don't know anyone with that specific skill.

C   What are you doing to enhance your spirituality in everyday life regarding your religion?

B   As a Buddhist, everyday I do good deeds and acts for my future *nirvana* from the morning through the rest of my day. As a mother or nurse, I wake up early in the morning to meditate to ignore or control my "self" desire (*kamma*), cooking food to offer to the monks and for the family, cleaning and washing the shrine room, and provide care for the many patients from the hospital and personal clinic. Now I am alive. That is why I have a chance to do *ku toe* (merits) for others and myself. I believe that having *ku toe* (merits) is very important for me and for my future life. After death, I can carry nothing from the earth, but *ku toe* (merits) can be and it will give me the answer of where I will be after death in the 31 planes.

C   In your opinion, how do you feel about suffering (*dukkha*) based on the teaching of Gautama Buddha?

B   I could say that Gautama Buddha's teaching is very good to control *karma* (intentional or willed act), *anatta* (self desire), and *anicca* (always changing, the impermanence of all things). I believe that if I can control my desire, I will have no more *dukkha* on this earth. For me personally, Gautama Buddha's teaching guides me to have a good character, attitude, and ethic. I believe that everyone is facing sufferings every day of our lives because no one can stop the sufferings, nor can we help others to stop the sufferings. It depends on the person how does he/she control or reduce his/her *dukkha*. I am sure that all religions are good but people who follows the teachings of religions are often not good.

C   What do you do to reduce *dukkha* in your life?

B   As a mother at home, I would teach my children to focus on *dana* and *ku toe.* The human realm is the best place to do good deeds and act to meet others' needs. By doing that it will give us more points for the future life in the 31 planes. On weekdays, I meditate in my shrine room and on weekends I will be in the Buddhist temple to control my anger, feeling, emotion, desire and impermanence of things from the earth. I teach and live as an exemplary model for my children. As a nurse, I help a lot of patients, ranging from normal sickness and fever, to heart attack, TB (tuberculosis), HIV, AIDS, and more. Some die in the hospital, I am very sorry to say, "go back". This means that we cannot help anymore. Regarding Buddhists in the hospital, some are ready to face death and transfer to another life in the 31 planes--- but some are not. According to Buddhists here in Myanmar, the way people face death is very important because some are dead by an accident, normal sickness, diseases, and killed by someone. The spirits of normal sick people are okay, but some of the spirits cannot pass to another realm. Their spirits are moving around the hospital and around their immediate areas. I am so worried for their spirits, but I can do nothing for them. I usually pray for them to pass from this situation. This is a way I believe I can do good deeds, acts, and attitudes to reduce my dukkha and have hope for a good life in another life.

C   Are you ready to face death for another life?

B   I am not ready yet because I have so many pressures for that. I would like to confess one thing on this issue. I like Christianity for this are. When some of friends and parents of Christians are sick, they can still sing and pray for one another in the hospital with their friends, families, and their Father or leaders. Even in the funeral service they can still sing joyfully. I think that they encourage each other for the physically, spiritually, and psychologically. If I am sick, they will come and encourage me to have good health. I want our Buddhist monk to come and encourage patients in the hospital. Here I could say that Buddhists' monks and Christian leaders are totally different. In Buddhism, Buddhist monks and Buddhists have much less connection. If someone is sick, our Buddhist monk cannot come and encourage us. I felt something for that, but I like Christians for it. They encourage each other as even Christian leaders or friends, neighbors, and family come and help one another. I appreciate that. As a Buddhist, I am really sorry to say this is an issue for us.

C   Regarding your answers, how is Christianity in your mind?

B   Can I answer what I have in my mind?

C   Yes, you can openly answer it.

B   So I will divide two parts to my answer.

C   Let me know please.

B   For the first part is positive answer. I could say that all religions' teachings are very good, but the people are not God. The Christian community is very united not only in their religion, but also in the social works. They have many different denominations but they help and care for one another. They love to help people's needs, they love to care for those of other religions too, as in the public areas in the hospital, where they will pray for patients if allowed, even if they are Buddhists or Muslims). They also give free education in their church. The church also has many organizations like for children, youth,

men and women, music, holistic mission departments etc. Christians have good attitudes, characters, behaviors and so on. I believe that Jesus Christ's and Buddha's teachings are based on good human ethics, but Christians are more obedient than Buddhists. That is why Christians have better attitudes than Buddhists in Myanmar. As a Buddhist, I have learned so many things from the Christians.

C   What is the second part?

B   For the second part is a negative answer. Christians are very Westernized. That is why many Buddhists feel Christianity is a foreign religion in Myanmar.

C   Can you give me more details for your statement please? You can tell me openly for this question.

B   Yes. The Christian lifestyle is very Westernized because they love to wear Western dress, their church is built like the Western form (including church's stage, chairs, instruments), their Christian gospel songs also are of a Western tune (including hymns), They love to live within their community only, not with other religions. This is not only my opinion, but also from friends, partners, co-workers, and neighbors. Sorry for this answer.

C   You are absolutely right. I confessed that it is true. Thanks for your answer. Let me continue my previous question. If you are not ready to face the next life, what will you do?

B   I do not know for it. According to the teaching of Gautama Buddha, Buddha shows me the way to release from the *dukkha* and guide me in the way to *nirvana*. That is why I try my best to do good deeds and acts everyday of my life and I meditate everyday for myself and for others too.

C   Are you sure of reaching *nirvana* after death?

B   I do not have confidence to answer your question because I am sure that I have to try again in another life too. I could say that *nirvana* is very difficult to reach directly from the life of human

beings. I may be above the human realm or below the human realm after death. I am not sure where I will be.

C   Can you give me a chance to testify the love of God?

B   Yes, you can.

The Christian here shares the Gospel with the focus of Jesus being one who liberates people from dukkha (suffering).

Appendix D

Other Rules of Dialogue

The Rules of Max Warren are not the only set of rules or principles for Interreligious Dialogue. In fact, they are not even the most well-known. Here are a few others. They vary considerably, including in how exact I quote them or give my personal commentary. Some are exact quotes, while others are paraphrases.

I. Leonard Swidler. Dialogue Decalogue[1]

1. The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn; that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly.

2. Interreligious, inter-ideological dialogue must be a two-sided project within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities.

3. Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity.

4. In interreligious, inter-ideological dialogue we must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice.

5. Each participant must define himself… Conversely, the interpreted must be able to recognize herself in the interpretation.

6. Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are.

7. Dialogue can take place only between equals… Both must come

to learn from each other.

8. Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust.

9. Persons entering into interreligious, inter-ideological dialogue must be at least minimal self-critical of both themselves and their own religious or ideological traditions.

10. Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology 'from within'; for a religion or ideology is not merely something of the head, but also of the spirit, heart, and 'whole being,' individual and communal.

II.   Stephen Neill.[2]

1) Approach with deep humility.

2) Be exposed to the full force of other faiths.

3) Rejoice in the good and beautiful of other faiths.

4) Learn from other faiths.

5) Be ready to believe the other faiths may have something to teach us.

6) Sympathize with other faith's efforts in relating to the needs of the world.

7) Listen to every criticism respectfully.

III.   John Stott. Four Attitudes for Effective Interfaith Dialogue.[3]

• Authenticity

• Humility

• Integrity

• Sensitivity

IV.   Donald Swearer.[4]

1) It is important *being engaged by the faith of the other* which opens a floor to be seriously challenged but not in a manner of too defensive advocacy for personal conviction.

2) The openness for serious engagement also demands the *awareness of the uniqueness of one's own faith* and without it dialogue becomes formless with unrelated parts resulting in syncretism.

3) It is also requisite to make a *reconsideration of the meaning of absolute or ultimate truth* keeping in mind the understanding of the partner's root in faith and tradition.

4) Considering *truth as relationship* where the partner's understanding or perception can assist the other to comprehend his relationship to God in a newer perspective which may be limited to him for his own blindness to some degree of personal perception.

5) The condition is taking dialogue as *imperative* as it actualizes one's faith to the other which may give one person an opportunity to grow more in own self-awareness as a religious person.

V.   Agnete Holm.[5]

1. Conversation is not one-way, but between two or three. Therefore the missionary should demand the same from the other as the other demands from him/her.

2. By doing conversation with the other religious person, the missionary can share or empathize with his/her joys, hopes, dreams and sorrows. Be trusting and trustworthy.

3. Be open and honest.

4. All missionaries should try to see and understand the other person's point of view.

5. All missionaries should remember to show respect.

VI. <u>Peter Feldmeier</u>. [6]

1. Be without covert or ulterior motives. Do not secretly be trying to convert them or prove yourself superior.

2. Cultivate an essential openness. Open mind, open heart

3. Religious traditions are respected in their own right. Seek to understand things from the perspective of the other faith tradition rather than one's own.

4. Differences are NOT to be avoided. Differences make dialogue interesting. Don't try to focus on just similarities or try hard to minimize differences.

5. Make no hasty determinations. Listen more, talk less. Be slow to make judgments.

VII <u>Guiding Principles</u>, From World Council of Churches.[7]

1. Dialogue must be a process of mutual empowerment, not a negotiation between parties who have conflicting interests and claims.

2. In dialogue we grow in faith. For Christians, involvement in dialogue produces constant reappraisal of our understanding of the Biblical and theological tradition.

3. In dialogue we affirm hope.

4. In dialogue we nurture relations.

5. In dialogue we must be informed by the context.

6. In dialogue we strive towards mutual respect.

7. In dialogue it is important to respect the integrity of religious traditions.

8. Dialogue is a cooperative and collaborative activity.

9. In dialogue we strive to be inclusive,

VIII.   Megan Phelps-Roper. Suggestions particularly pertaining to discussion of faith issues on-line:[8]

- Don't Assume Bad Intent. Usually, people share their cherished beliefs because they believe they are beneficial to the recipient, and perhaps to society as a whole.
- Ask Questions. People often want to talk but not listen. But asking helps you learn. It also makes the other person more likely to try to understand you.
- Stay Calm. It is tempting to get angry and lash out. Fear and anger are responses to threats. But dialogue is a real threat.
- Make the Argument. If you truly believe something is true and you believe that the world would be a better place if they agree with you, than explain it so that it makes sense to people who don't already share your perspective.

IX.   Raimon Panikkar. *The Sermon on the Mount for Intrareligious Dialogue*[9]

"When you enter into an intrareligious dialogue, do not *think* beforehand what you have to believe.

When you witness to your faith, do not defend yourself or your vested interests, sacred as they may appear to you. Do like the birds in the skies: they sing and fly and do not defend their music or their beauty.

When you dialogue with somebody, look at your partner as a revelatory experience as you would- and should- look at

the lilies in the fields.

When you engage in intrareligious dialogue, try first to remove the beam in your own eye before removing the speck in the eye of your neighbor.

Blessed are you when you do not feel self-sufficient while being in dialogue.

Blessed are you when you trust the other because you trust in Me.

Blessed are you when you face misunderstandings from your own community or others for the sake of your fidelity to Truth.

Blessed are you when you do not give up your convictions, and yet you do not set them up as absolute norms.

Woe unto you, you theologians and academicians, when you dismiss what others say because you find it embarrassing or not sufficiently learned.

Woe unto you, you practitioners of religions, when you do not listen to the cries of the little ones.

Woe unto you, you religious authorities, because you prevent change and (re)conversion.

Woe unto you, you religious people, because you monopolize religion and stifle the Spirit which blows where and how she wills."

X. Ten Rules for Interfaith Dialogue [10]

   1 Have a good grasp of your own tradition

2 Come to dialogue in order to learn and grow, not to change the other

3 Be willing also to help your own faith community to grow and change

4 Be honest and sincere and assume that others are equally honest and sincere

5 Respect the religious experience and identity of others and anticipate that they will do the same for you.

6 Don't assume in advance where points of agreement or disagreement will exist

7 Be prepared to participate in dialogue on an equal footing

8 Be self-reflective and prepared to critique your own tradition

9 Strive to experience the other's faith 'from within' and be prepared to view yourself differently as a result of an 'outside' perspective

10 Try to be aware of the cultural conditioning and historical memory we bring to dialogue

Appendix E

CASE STUDY

Dialogue Case Study Format[1]

Your Name:_____

Date of Visit/s:_____

Initials of Conversant:_____

Religion/Belief System:_____

Gender:_____ Age:_____

Length of Conversation:_____

Location of Conversation: _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

PREPARATION/OBSERVATIONS:

REASON FOR PRESENTING THIS CONVERSATION:

VERBATIM REPORT

ANALYSIS OF THE ENCOUNTER

ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSATION IN LINE OF THE DIALOGUE RULES

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Endnotes

Chapter 1

[1] There are many definitions for "dialogue." This one came from www.merriam-webster.com. A nice article that speaks of dialogue in terms of relationship, is "The Difference Between Dialogue and Discussion," by Kevin Eikenberry (https://blog.kevineikenberry.com/communication-interpersonal-skills/difference-dialogue-discussion/).

[2] Elmar Holenstein. *Roman Jakobson's Approach to Language: Phenomenological Structuralism.* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976). Or consider looking at a Prezi presentation, "*Roman Jakobson's Six Functions of Language.*" https://prezi.com/aejmchywvlzn/roman-jakobsons-six-functions-of-language/

[3] David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-culturally* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 164ff.

[4] Eileen Dombrowski, "*Facts Matter After All: Rejecting the 'Backfire Effect'*" Oxford Education Blog of Oxford University, March 12, 2018, https://educationblog.oup.com/theory-of-knowledge/facts-matter-after-all-rejecting-the-backfire-effect. This post provides a good summary of findings that challenge the backfire effect, at least as it is commonly understood. It shows that "pushback" is a better term for the tendency of people to hold tenaciously to their current beliefs, while still allowing themselves to be open to strong evidence against.

[5] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 90.

[6] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), 31.

[7] Wayne Oates. *Psychology of Religion* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1973), chapter one. This is a good book for giving a lot of important aspects of religion from a psychological perspective---except in giving a concise definition of "Religion."

[8] Charles Darwin, *A Naturalist's Voyage Round the World, Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle under the Command of Captain Fitz Roy, R.N.* (London: John Murray, 1845). The same passage is referred to in my book, *Ministry in Diversity*, 137.

[9] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Chritian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 68-69.

Chapter 2

[1] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

Chapter 3

[1] Norman Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 188-190.

[2] Harvey Cox, "*Many Mansions or One Way? The Crisis in Interfaith Dialogue*". The Christian Century. August 17-24, 1998. 731-735.

[3] Celsus, *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians*, trans. R. Joseph Hoffman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Section X.

[4] Justo L. Gonzalez. The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1 (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 231-232.

[5] Athenogoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians.* Available at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0205.htm.

[6] Charles E. Moore. "*Pandemic Love*," https://www.plough.com/en/ topics/faith/discipleship/pandemic-love.

[7] Paul L. Maier, Eusebius--- The. Church History (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 329.

[8] *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch Before the Caliph Mahdi. Original published as Timothy's Apology for Christianity.* from the "Bulletin of the John Rylands Library," *Volume* 12, 1928 Cambridge W. Heffer & Sons. It is available online on http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/timothy_i_apology_00_intro.htm

[9] There are several places to read about St. Francis' dialogue with Sultan al Kamil. One sources is https://sufiways.com/2016/05/02/st-francis-of-assisi-and-sultan-al kamil -a-bold-christian-muslim-encounter/

[10] Arnulf Camps, *Partners in Dialogue: Christianity and Other Religions,* trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 28..

[11] *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch.*

Chapter 4

[1] **T**he report was eventually published in book form: William Ernest Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932). It is available online as well. https://archive.org/details/rethinkingmissio011901 mbp/page/n7

[2] "The Christian Message" can be found in *Classics of Christian Missions*, Francis M. DuBose, ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979).

[3] John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 133.

[4] Ronald K. Orchard, ed., "Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches." Held in Mexico City, 8-19 December 1963.

[5] Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology, 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Creative Tension--Ecumenical, Evangelical and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1980). This is an excellent book for gaining an understanding great upheavals in missions thought over the time-frame covered.

[6.] Ibid., 73.

[7] Again I must point people back to Bassham's book. However, a long quote of Raimon Panikkar can be found in Part IX of Appendix D.

[8] I really have to point people back to Bassham's book for much of the discussions and battles regarding missions and dialogue in the 1960s.

[9] Tim Yates, "*Evangelicalism without Hyphens: Max Warren, the Tradition and Theology of Mission*" The Anvil, Vol II. No. 3. 1985. 231-245.

[10] *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979),Item 29.

[11] *Baar Statement: Theological Perspectives on Plurality.* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990), Section V.

Chapter 5

[1] Peter Feldmeier, *Encounters in Faith: Christianity in Inter-religious Dialogue* (Wynona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011), 13-14.

[2] This is not to say that John Hick, embracing a relativizing stance only sought to focus on the "common ground" of different religions, ignoring the differences. From the preface of his book, "God Has Many Names," Hick clarifies, *"The need is for a theory which allows us to see, and to be fascinated by, the differences as well as the similarities between the great world faiths. Accordingly it must not set up a pressure to think that the religions all conceive of the Real in the same way, or all produce the same human response to the Real, or all have the same expectations concerning our human future beyond this life. But at the same time it must be true to the basic awareness of our*

time that in all the great traditions at their best the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is perceptions of and responses to the Real from within the different ways of being human." John Hick, *God has Many Names* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980), 9. Also note that aligning a view on salvation with a view of dialogue is overly simplified. For example, George Lindbeck, proponent of Post-Liberal Theology is an Ecumenist (or Pluralist) but rejects a relativistic approach to dialogue.

[3].Martin Buber's quote is brought up in chapter 7. See footnote 2 in chapter 7.

[4] Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 28. He quotes from Judge Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 18-20.

[5] Harvey Cox, "Many Mansions or One Way? The Crisis in Interfaith Dialogue,".731-735.

[6] Brian McLaren. *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004). McLaren looks at various traditions within Christianity sympathetically considering how each has positive aspects that he can find valuable in his understanding of being a follower of Jesus. While this book is sometimes challenged by Christian writers, a sympathetic reading of the book can help one see that groups (even groups you are pretty sure are wrong in many ways) have things that are valuable that others can learn from.

Chapter 6

[1] Czeslaw Mirosz, The Captive Mind, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage International, 1981), epigraph. The quote is ascribed by the author to "an old Jew of Galicia."

[2] Camps, 27-28.

[3] Merold Westphal speaks of post-modernism in terms of our inability to be 'peeking over God's shoulder.' Sadly, I cannot find the source of that quote, although I believe I heard it on a podcast of

Homebrewed Christianity. With that in mind, it is recommended to listen to his interview on that podcast. https://homebrewed christianity.com/2015/07/30/merold-westphal-on-endofreligion/

[4] Peter L. Berger and Anton C. Zijderveld, *In Praise of Doubt, How to Have Convictions Without Becoming a Fanatic* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 104-107).

[5] Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, July 1987, 104-112. He describes three types of contextualization--- non-contextualization, uncritical contextualization, and critical contextualization. Hiebert notes that uncritical contextualization can lead to syncretism. However, he sees non-contextualization as leading to a Christianity that is a veneer over the religious culture or the people, or perhaps simply seen as a foreign faith.

6 This author has seen advertisements for Unitarian-Universalist churches with the lure of "Create Your Own Theology." If there are no certain truths and no certain paths, then "doing what seems right in one's own eyes" makes a lot of sense.

[7] Jackson Wu in "True, But Confusing Advice, for Missionaries" (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2017/06/01/true-confusing-advice-missionaries/) has noted that non-contextualization can also lead to syncretism, particularly a syncretism of the gospel message and the culture of the missionary. This idea is fleshed out more in his book *One Gospel For All Nations* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 6 (and elsewhere in the book).

[8] Berger, 106-107.

9 Stephen Bevans describes Newman's thoughts on the illative Sense in Boston University video. Stephen Bevans, "Fair or Foul: Contextual Theology and Criteria for Orthodoxy," Annual Brown Lecture Series, Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Missions, and the Center for Practical Theology, Nov 1, 2012. Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUPPAVEkULc

[10] Berger, 116-119.

Chapter 7

[1] Dawud Walid is presently the executive director of the Michigan chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. I have not found the source of the quote. But it can be seen commonly on the Internet as a quote attributed to him.

[2] W. A. Vissert-Hooft, *No Other Name: the Choice Between Syncretism and Christian Universalism* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 117.

Chapter 8

[1] John Hick. *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 119ff. Discussed in Yates, 239.

[2] Grace Ji-Sun Kiam, *A Global Understanding of the Spirit*, Dialogue & Alliance 21 (2007), 17-31.

[3] Raymond Lawrence, "The Vicissitudes of Spirituality" in *The Healing Power of Spirituality:How Faith Helps Humans Thrive*, J. Harold Ellens, Ed., (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 105-121.

[4] Harvey Cox, "Many Mansions or One Way? The Crisis in Interfaith Dialogue". *The Christian Century*. August 17-24, 1998. 731-735.

[5] Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions: Trinitarian "Rules" for a Pneumatological Theology of Religions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 121-127.

[6] Consider reading *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* by Gavin D'Costa, 2000.

Chapter 9

[1] Gordon D. Kaufmann. *God the Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), Chapter 5 "God as Symbol."

[2] Anderson., 169-174.

[3] Harvey Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit: The Use and Misuse of People's Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), 9.

[4] An interesting book that deals with redemptive analogies is *Eternity in their Hearts* by Don Richardson.

[5] Megan Phelps-Roper's "I Grew Up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here is Why I Left," TED Talk video is available at https://www.ted.com/talks/megan_phelps_roper_i_grew_up_in_the_we stboro_baptist_church_here_s_why_i_left?language=en

Chapter 10

[1] Max Warren developed his seven rules over time. The first time that all seven were listed together formally was in T*he Relationship Between Christianity and Other World Religions,* Prism Pamphlet 30 (1966), 19. An analysis of these rules is in "Max Warren en sy sewe reëls vir 'n dialoog tussen Christene en nie- Christene." by P.G.J. Meiring, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*, Vol. 47 #3-4 ((2006).

[2] Eddie Arthur, "Missio Dei and the Mission of the Church." Available at http://www.wycliffe.net/missiology?id=3960.

[3] This section very briefly summarizes the growth of a Trinitarian understanding of Missions. More information can be found in Bassham's book. Additionally, one may refer to David Bosch in Transforming Mission (1991, pages 389-391). Further, the reference to Willis and Blackaby relates to their book *On Mission with God.*

[4] Robert H. Munson. *Ministry in Diversity: Applied Cultural Anthropology in a Multicultural World, 2nd ed.* (Baguio City, Philippines, MM-Musings, 2017), 11.

[5] The term "Contextualization" is seen to have been coined by Shocki Coe in 1972 Theological Education Fund. More discussion on Contextualization can be found in the book *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013) by David L. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen

[6] Harvie M. Conn, *Eternal World and Changing Worlds*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1992), 237.

Chapter 11

[1] Bruce J. Nichols. *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture.* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 21.

[2] If terms like "feedback," "encode," and "decode" seem unfamiliar, they are associated with the Cybernetic Model of Communication Theory. This won't be covered in this book, but you are certainly encouraged to research it on your own.

[3] Hiebert.

[4] Chapter One lists seven barriers to effective communication associated with cultural barriers.

[5] Hiebert

[6] Hesselgrave, Communicating Christ Cross-culturally, 143..

[7] Duane Alexander Miller uses terms for two types of contextualization. One is "Directed Contextualization" while the other is "Organic Contextualization." The former is contextualization that is driven by the missionary. The missionary tells the group being reached how the Christian faith fits into their context. The latter is driven by the group being reached. I do not know if he uses these terms in any of his books. I found his use of these terms in a review of Bruce Nichol's book, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture.* (https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/193229614). A book that Miller recommends that he notes makes a strong separation between directed and organic contextualization is by Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies.*

[8] Countercultural Contextualization is one of six broad models described by Stephen Bevans in his book, *Models of Contextual Theology.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

[9] See Chapter 6 Footnote 7.

Chapter 12

[1] See Chapter 5, Footnote 4.

[2] "Ten Rules for Interfaith Dialogue" in Principles and Guidelines of Interfaith Dialogue. Available in the online publication. https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/academics/centres/cjcml/PGID-%20How%20to%20Dialogue.pdf

[3] Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 67-81.

[4] *1599 Geneva Bible: Patriot's Edition* (White Hall, WV: Tolle Lege Press, 2010).

[5] Munson, *Ministry in Diversity,* 28.

Chapter 13

[1] J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission (Gr*and Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 206.

[2] *The San Antonio Report*, ed. F. R. Wilson (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990) I.27, 32. Quoted in *World Christianity in Local Context: Essays in Memory of David A. Kerr, Volume 1*, ed. Stephen R. Goodwin (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 21.

[3] Susan Campbell, "Scratching the Itch: Paul's Athenian Speech Shaping Mission Today" *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 35 #2, April 2011, 178.

Chapter 14

[1] The Johari Window was developed by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham. More information is available in chapter 7 of *The Art of Pastoral Care,* by Robert and Celia Munson (Baguio City, Philippines: 2018). Also see Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham,

Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics (Houston, TX: Mayfield Publishing, 1984).

Appendix A

[1] See Chapter 3 Footnote 8.

Appendix B

[1] The English translation of the work by Handsome Lake is from *The Code of Handsome Lake, The Seneca Prophet*, translated by Arthur C. Parker in 1913. An electronic version of the book is available online at http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/iro/parker/ index.htm

Appendix C

[1] This conversation was used with permission from a dialogue in the Master of Theology thesis of Brang Di Aung, *An Applicable Presentation of Christian Salvation Through Contextual Conversation Among Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar Utilizing Max Warren's Rules of Dialogue*, unpublished as of this time, at Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (Baguio City, Philippines, ABGTS, 2019). The dialogue quoted in this book comes from chapter three of the thesis.

Appendix D

[1] Leonard Swidler, **"**The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue," *Horizons, 10*(2), 1983. 348-351. The "short-form" of this list of rules comes from https://www. scarboromissions.ca/interfaith-dialogue/principles-and-guidelines-for-interfaith-dialogue?singlepage=1

[2] Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith and Other Faiths* (London: Oxford, 1961), 18-19.

[3] John R.W. Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World (Madison, WI: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 71-73.

[4] Donald K. Swearer, *Dialogue: The Key to Understanding Other Religions* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1977), 41-50.

[5] Agnete Holm, "*Facilitating a Workshop For Dialogue.*" Engagement: Bulletin of the Judson Research Center 13 (August, 2012): 85-86. I have not been able to get hold of a copy of this article, so I am relying on a rough second-hand account of this work. Hopefully it is repeated here accurately enough.

[6] Peter Feldmeier, *Encounters in Faith: Christianity in Interreligious Dialogue* (Wynona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011), 20.

[7] *Guidelines for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches., 2002). Available for viewing online at https://www.oikoumene.org/ en/resources/documents/central-committee/2002/guidelines-for-dialogue-and-relations-with-people-of-other-religions

[8] See Chapter 9 Footnote 5.

[9] Raimon Panikkar, "The Sermon on the Mount of Intrareligious Dialogue", *Journal of Ecumenical Studie*s, Philadelphia 4, 1985.   It May be found online at https://interfaithspace.wordpress .com/2006/06/12/the-sermon-on-the-mount-for-interreligious-dialogue/

[10] This list can be found several places online. On place is https://chaplain.wfu.edu/chaplains-office/guidelines-interfaith-dialogue/.Chapter 12 Footnote 2 gives another location.

Appendix E

[1] There are many different formats for doing conversational case presentations. This one is loosely based on a format used by Bukal Life Care & Counseling Center (www.bukallifecare.org).

Selected Bibliography

This is a selected biography in that a few references in the Endnotes that were minor or simply suggested for additional readings may not be included here. Additionally, as noted in the Endnotes, the webpages referenced were accurate as of the date of this publication.

1599 Geneva Bible: Patriot's Edition. White Hall, WV: Tolle Lege Press, 2010.

Anderson, Norman. *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism.* Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984**.**

The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch Before the Caliph Mahdi. Original published as Timothy's Apology for Christianity. **from the** "Bulletin of the John Rylands Library," *Volume* 12, Cambridge W. Heffer & Sons, 1928. Available online at http://www.tertullian. org/fathers/timothy_i_apology_00_intro.htm

Arthur, Eddie. "Missio Dei and the Mission of the Church." Available online at http://www.wycliffe.net/missiology?id=3960.

Athenogoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians.* Available online at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0205.htm.

Aung, Brang Di. *An Applicable Presentation of Christian Salvation Through Contextual Conversation Among Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar Utilizing Max Warren's Rules of Dialogue*, unpublished as of this time, at Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (Baguio City, Philippines, ABGTS, 2019).

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