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# **Ecumenism and *Nostra Aetate* in the 21st Century**

*George F. McLean, John P. Hogan*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## Preface

*John P. Hogan*

What should the Roman Catholic Church say now on the 40th anniversary of the Vatican II *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)* which could not have been envisaged when that ground breaking document was originally drafted?

This small volume is a report on a collaborative effort to identify elements to be taken into account in any response to that question. The study was organized by The Center for the Study of Culture and Values (CSCV) of The Catholic University of America (CUA) and The Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., USA to identify elements to be taken into account in any response to that question.

The consultation summarized here was a two month discussion by a group of scholars brought together by the CSCV from around the world. Their purpose was not merely to recognize the profound and pioneering insights which can be culled from *Nostra Aetate* (1965), but especially to revisit the contents of the document in the light of the rapidly advancing international and global context and the possibilities and imperatives this opens for interaction among cultures and religions.

The Center for the Study of Culture and Values is an academic institute which seeks to unfold the cultural, philosophical and theological values that shape and motivate human actions. In this, the Center works with the global network of scholarly teams formed by The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy ([www.crvp.org](http://www.crvp.org)). These teams research and draft works to identify the cultural values of their people, and especially to apply these in response to the challenges of contemporary change and cooperation among peoples.

The Pope John Paul II Cultural Center seeks to advance the rich human insights and apostolic concerns of Pope John Paul II. It focuses on the importance of culture and its religious roots as the free response of peoples to the work of the Spirit in the world. Both organizations grow from, and continue, the Church's living traditions by applying these with new insight to present circumstances.

This consultation in the Fall of 2003 brought together scholars from China, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Nigeria, Congo (DROC), Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, Netherlands and the United States. This report summarizes their frank but friendly weekly reflections on: African traditional religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, all in the context of the coming anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. Concretely, participants were asked to respond to the following questions from the perspective of their own traditions:

1. What is the nature of this particular religion and what are its salient characteristics?
2. What can it hope to contribute to the religious patrimony of humankind?
3. What forms of recognition does it expect from other religions?
4. What are its interests in dialogue with other religions; how could this best be implemented?
5. What might a revised and much expanded *Nostra Aetate* say today with regard to this religious tradition?

The exploration of their respective religious traditions was led by the following:

1. African Traditional Religions: Msgr. Théodore Mudiji, Faculté Catholique and Institute of African Religions, Kinshasa, Congo (DROC); and Dr. Chibueze C. Udeani, Nigeria and Department of Intercultural Theology and Study of Religions, Faculty of Theology, University of Salzburg, Austria;

2. Hinduism: Dr. D.C. Rao, Washington Interfaith Forum, Washington, D.C.

3. Buddhism: Dr. Veerachart Nimanong, School of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

4. Judaism: Rabbi Leon Klenicki, Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith, New York

5. Islam: Imam Yahya Hendi, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Each was assisted by colleagues from their religious tradition.

Warm hospitality was offered by The John Paul II Cultural Center. A note of gratitude is extended to Father Francis Martin and to Mrs. Karen King. The setting provided a perfect situation for critical but kind interchange – a table around which the "practice of friendship and faith" could be lived.

## Introduction

*George F. McLean and John P. Hogan*

With the passage of time gradually it appears how truly prophetic was the shortest of the documents of Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*. For along with other documents of the Council it recognized the importance of the great religions as multiple paths to God.

In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions. . . .

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.

Like the document on religious liberty which affirmed the sanctity of conscience in religious matters, the Council proceeded with the recognition that a full or even adequate theology of the matter had not yet been worked out. Nevertheless, it recognized that the broad lines urgently needed to be stated for the progression of religion and civil life in our times.

The pioneering wisdom of this document has become increasingly clear. The evolution of human experience in living out God's wondrous gifts has led to the exercise of human freedom in its highest form, namely, its response to the glory of God our maker.

Now forty years later we find that recognition of the multiple religions as recognizing and rendering honor to the creator calls them to intensive efforts to appreciate, mutually respect and cooperate among themselves. This interchange has been vastly intensified by global communication as well as by the surging economic, political and especially cultural interaction. All conspire to enable a deeper appreciation of the distinctive way by which each people has, with profound devotion, come to honor God by cooperating with the work of the Spirit; this is the very heart of the particular cultures. The patterns of community, social compassion and self-sacrificing love image that divine life.

Indeed the intensity of this impulse has come now to present humankind with its greatest challenge. To the degree that peoples succeed in imaging the divine life they fulfill the radical search for happiness that gives meaning to all. But where they depart from this image the resulting privation of the good constitutes the catastrophe of sin and evil. As men and women are fallible it can be expected that they will at times become confused in their search for the good. In those cases, the very intensity of the search to imitate and respond to the Absolute Good in turn provides the potential for even greater evil.

Hence at this fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* we find much to celebrate in the progress of relations among religions which it unleashed. However, we find also much to be concerned about when efforts to protect a faith become confused and unleash "holy" fervor which too swiftly can degenerate into inter-religious competition and conflict.

We are challenged today therefore:

- to see the distinctive and varied devotion of each of the great religions and the proper contribution each makes to the basic human endeavor of honoring our maker by living in truth and love the life received from him;

- to see how these religions can relate to one another in a positive and complementary manner; and
- to work out in the terms proper to each religion its distinctive manner of relating to God and to other religions.

Here we shall focus on the first two tasks, leaving the third to the theologians of the various faiths. Hence this report is not a theological treatise, but rather a brief summary of a consultation of religions in order to identify their present self concepts, sensibilities and possibilities for cooperative interchange. To work on the first two challenges a team of some 15 scholars reflecting the various major religions and cultures met weekly at the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., to review the following set of five questions in relation to each of the great religious traditions:

1. What is the nature of the particular religion and what are its salient characteristics?
2. What can it hope to contribute to the religious patrimony of humankind?
3. What forms of recognition does it expect from other religions?
4. What are its interests in dialogue with other religions; how could this best be implemented?
5. What might a revised *Nostra Aetate* say with regard to these global religious traditions?

These questions seek the lines of continuity across the religions, with special attention to each unique contribution. This allowed the participants to get a glimpse of what might be hoped for if it were possible for the religious to draw from one another in a process that would not destroy or diminish, but enrich and evolve all traditions. In this way it might be hoped that the meeting of religions would not be a search for an abstract universal remote from daily life, but rather a mutually corrective and complementary process. In this each could evolve in ways adapted to, and promotive of, its concrete religious effort to become ever more fully open to the divine and reflective thereof.

What could such a survey hope to contribute with reference to *Nostra Aetate*? A number of objectives were particularly salient:

1. to see if some dimensions of the religious experience of the great faiths were omitted in *Nostra Aetate*. Indeed, this obviously is the case as can be seen from the brevity of the overall document; its one paragraph recognition, rather than treatment, of the great religions of the East; and its total omission of the traditional religions of Africa;
2. to identify central dimensions of the religious outlook of members of faiths which have been little known by others. This opportunity for each to speak for itself is an essential prerequisite for renewing and redeveloping documents on the increasingly urgent issues of the relation between peoples and their cultures based in their religions;
3. to draw upon important religious resources found in the separate religious traditions and now required for the progress of all. Similar to the way the genetic resources of certain wild grains prove to be keys to agricultural resiliency, there is need to look for elements in one or another religious tradition which are particularly needed by others in facing their religious challenges of life in our times;
4. to complement one tradition by religious insights drawn from others in order to render each more integral in relation to the contemporary evolution of human life. This task was seen less as making external additions by alien elements than as the stimulation of a tradition to go more deeply



into its own religious resources in order to evolve more adapted modes of religious response to present circumstances; and

5. to see how the religions can help one another in making their indispensable contribution to the needs of our secularizing culture.

The following are the reports on the successive consultations on African traditional religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.



## Report on African Traditional Religions

### The Nature of African Traditional Religions (ATR)

African Traditional Religions (ATR) are plural if seen in their dispersion across Africa, but singular when contrasted to non-African religions. As traditional they are originally African, whereas others such as Islam and Christianity came to Africa at a particular time.

They are not only, or even especially, cognitive, but rather are the bases of lived daily experience. By relating people to God they set the basic terms of how one lives and interact with other humans, whether the unborn, the living or the dead, and treats nature as well.

ATR have three components: God, humans and nature.

1. *God* is seen as the supreme and all powerful being, the sole creator and father of all who decides life and death. As the origin or destroyer of the universe in the heavens above, God is masculine. However, the Deity has a female tonality when seen in terms of the earth as mother. Thus God is also immanent and engaged in deciding about the life and the death of persons and the creation and destruction of the universe as a whole.

2. *Humans* have a relational identity, that is, they are related to God. This relation to the absolute is affirmed in initiation rites. Humans are seen in terms of communities or faith groups and include: (a) the unborn, whose membership in the human community is reflected in rituals; (b) the living, who are arranged in a hierarchy according to their age, with the elder considered more experienced in the encounter with the divine; and (c) the ancestors, who are seen as the living dead. The ancestors are considered to be very much present; particular places are left for them in the living quarters of their descendants. Traditional healers are special representatives of God.

3. *Nature*, in turn, is viewed as the place of divine revelation. It is not worshiped, but is considered a manifestation, revelation or theophany. Hence there is an attitude of friendship toward nature.

The overall relationship of God, man and nature constitutes an integrated whole. It is not that God breaths life separately into each individual who then goes off by him- or herself. Rather the creative divine breath continues to flow, as it were. It comes from God, via the ancestors, and through one's parents on a continuing basis; one's parents continually give life to their children. Hence all live in a perduring religious context as sharing together in this continuing flow of life from God. This calls for continual engagement and for expression, e.g., in music or dance.

Thus, the two basic realities are God who is mysterious and breaths life into humans; and humans who are seen as both essentially related to God by the gift of life and creative with regard to nature. The continuous character of this relationship to God has some analogy to the continuous way in which Christ proceeds from His father.

### What Can ATR Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?

There is a hesitation on the part of Africans to accept themselves — as is expressed in contemporary art forms. Conversely ATR have not been adequately recognized as a world religion, perhaps because religion has been looked at as a way of life directed by a sacred text. ATR could

be seen more truly as a world religion if taken as a proto religion in that they relate everything to the one creator and hence interrelate peoples among themselves. This is a primary and foundational insight for all religions, even if not put down in written form. Though the mode of transcendence of the one creator is not much discussed, God is seen clearly as the one source that unites us all.

ATR are especially characterized by a vibrant living harmony. The coming together as children of the same divine Father is celebrated in community as the special gift of life. The emphasis is not on the I or ego, but on us as brothers and sisters. This is manifested in the strong African sense of hospitality where the other is seen as oneself. It is reflected also in the sense of morality which permeates daily life and is manifested in how one gets along with others, as well as in self-criticism.

These senses of community and of morality join in considering sin to be a community affair which destroys the social body. This is not seen as doing something to God who is considered too great to be effected, but it does upset the community. This is in some tension with the sense of ransom found in the Church's liturgy and to the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Cross inasmuch as they stress the theological dimensions of sin.

ATR are particularly inspired by a true sense of the sacredness of life and all its elements. Hence, for African Christians, the gospel of John and then of Luke are preferred as stressing the gifts of love and of life. This is reflected also in, e.g., the ceremonial throwing of bits of food or of pouring a libation on the ground as one begins to eat or drink, and in the attention given to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The sense of community and of continuing creation are special African contributions which enrich and unfold the Christian tradition. They are less appreciated in the West due to its intensive individualistic outlook originating from late medieval Nominalism. Also the African spirit is authentically spiritual in its breadth of concern for all humankind. The ATR sense of the sacred, of evil and of hospitality reflects an integrated rational system which resists being submerged by a Western cultural imperialism.

### **What Forms of Recognition Do ATR Expect from Other Religions?**

Indeed as these insights which are basic to all religions emerged early in Africa and have remained the constant and clear focus of ATR, they are not only proto religious but ur-religious. In some ways they manifest more starkly the basic commitments which all religions endeavor bring to life and to make vivid. This is the real basis for the recognition of ATR, namely, as a special key to the religious authenticity of all others.

Attitudinally, in the globalizing context, the ATR need new ways to relate to other religions that are not exploitive of Africa, but recognize the African personality and the value its way of life. In these terms there can be a true dialogue with other religious traditions, particularly with Islam and Christianity.

Two things should be noted as well. One is that projects of interaction require financial support. This, in turn, is an indication of the degree of seriousness with which the interaction is undertaken.

The other is that the rejection of any imposition upon Africa of values from other parts of the world does not mean that African cultures do not contain negative elements or are above effective criticism. As human all cultures have not only limitations, but negative elements contrary to the proper progress of their people. These need to be subject to criticism which can lead to improvements in the life of the people.

The broad dynamism of intersecting cultures can challenge and even overwhelm the ability to change. Hence, it should not be expected that everyone will accept all of a densely integrated faith such as Christianity or Islam; that could cause very real alienation. On the other hand, as oral, African culture may also be especially malleable. As it is kept alive in memory this archival store passes away with the death of each person. This great loss to the community needs to be restored and readapted to the minds of subsequent generations who can reconfigure it.

At the same time, it must be recognized that African cultures reflect the longest experience of human living and, as noted above, possess an exceptionally strong integrative sense of both creator and creation. For example, marriage is seen in terms of the continued flow of life in which children are an essential factor. This is in some contrast to the Western more legal-contractual view of marriage.

Finally, two reflections from other cultural contexts discussed in this colloquium may be revealing. In Indonesia Christianity is numerically a small minority and somewhat alienated from the general culture. Yet, due to its educational efforts it holds a strong position in society. On the other hand, Islam though very broadly practiced has had less prestige in the past. Now after long suppression the resurgent Muslim identity can at times take on a more militant and fundamentalist form. From Thailand there was the suggestion of a need for more positive and optimistic attention to the values found in other traditions.

### **What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with regard to Other Religious Traditions?**

Though ATR did not appear in *Nostra Aetate*, in any future such document it must hold a respected place. In this regard it should be noted that:

1. to pass from a hidden to an explicitly recognized place in future documents would give legitimacy to the African search for God;
2. to develop a more adequate knowledge of what is specific to ATR, while at the same time rejecting what is negative in both these and in other religions, are conditions for honest dialogue;
3. to learn from the experience of the life of the African peoples and to draw upon the symbols they have evolved to express meaning is an important element of inculturation; and
4. to work pastorally in engaging the life efforts of the people will be more effective than a more speculative approach.

The effort to return to one's cultural roots in order to discover more of the rich meaning of one's life is being repeated not only in Africa, but among other cultures as well. Hence a polycentric approach is now possible so that together all can rise above the natural to a supernatural life.

It would be good to explore this in two directions. First with regard to the phenomenon of totemism which, though not unique to Africa, may be more alive there than elsewhere in our times. As noted above, in one sense this can be looked at as a proto religion, inasmuch as the totem is treated as sacred. Yet from another point of view it entails a very deep center for religious vision, i.e., the unity in which all else have their participated meaning. In this way it is not only proto-religious, but ur-religious constituting a hierophany in which all is religious, mystical symbols of the supernatural yet to be manifested, and the basic religious insight which all religions share and express each in their own symbol system.

In this light ATR are an etiological search for a founding human meaning. Not only is inculturated Christianity a way of living this religious content, but dialogue with ATR can uncover more of the roots of Christianity as well as of ATR. In this sense Christianity would be also – though by no means only – a point of access to the deeper meaning of ATR and thereby to a richer sense of religion as such. The hope in ATR is that sharing with it can help to live one's own religious life more fully.

The exploration of this raises in turn the issue of a properly African philosophy and theology on which immense and promising work lies ahead. We are but at the beginning of a recognition of the significance of totem and proverb. We have but begun the development of a proper hermeneutics for oral cultures that will make possible retrieval and reflection upon the workings of the Spirit in the hearts and minds of the African peoples.

Religion is a gift of God to all humanity, like a river ever flowing from generation to generation. The African religions may well have been at the headwaters of this flow and remain most aware and focused upon its source. ATR can now be seen as flowing into other great religions and providing their basic form and a foundational orientation.

# Report on The Hindu Religious Tradition

## The Nature of the Hindu Religious Tradition

Hinduism can be viewed as both a comprehensive path of spirituality and a practical way of life.

To answer the question of how one can be happy most people look in the wrong place, i.e., to the acquisition of external goods rather than to proceeding within to deeper levels of self and ultimately to the experience of the absolute Self.

Here the goal is to understand and experience the divine which is beyond, not only sense perception, but intellectual definition. This is symbolized by the sacred symbol and sound "Om" which is beyond human experience in any direct way. "Brahman" indicates the "great"; this omnipresent has three transcendental properties, namely:

- existence (*sat*), the basis of the reality of everything through all their limitless changes and of being itself,
- consciousness (*cit*), not awareness of some thing, but the principle by which our organs of perception and of thought act, and indeed the translucence of being,
- bliss (*ananda*), the principle of happiness as living (*sat*), self-aware (*cit*) and enjoyed.

On the individual level this is the atman. The great schools of Hinduism divide precisely on the issue of the relation of the atman and the Brahman. However, generally it can be said that it is not I who am divine, but that what is essential in me as the deeper principle of my existence, consciousness and bliss is the divine. Hence we need to be aware that most radically I am of the nature of bliss. It is precisely the goal of the spiritual path to realize this awareness of the divine part of our experience. To a pure and still mind, beyond sense and intellect, the divine is self evident for it is of the very nature of consciousness.

That most people spend most of their time in pursuit of material success and the fulfillment of desires is not seen as intrinsically wrong. The danger, however, is that one forget the divine, and that at its root our own nature is this existence, consciousness and bliss. Hence, discipline is needed in order to strive toward this awareness. A number of levels have been worked out, tested and generally agreed upon over the ages. Each of the Hindu traditions has its own emphasis among these levels and approaches.

Buddhism came as a reform movement for 1000 years within Hinduism in India. It spread East to Sri Lanka and to Indo-China, North through China to Korea and Japan, and West to Tibet. This will be treated next. At the end of this 1000 years Hinduism once again became resurgent and totally predominant in India.

The levels of Hindu discipline are:

1. *Dharma*. This controls *artha* and *karma* and emphasizes nonviolence and non acquisitiveness; through austerity it leads to surrender to the divine.

2. *Karma Yoga*: Because one with the self control of Dharma could still be poorly oriented in his or her action, karma yoga directs one beyond self-interest and grasping the fruit of action to

focus upon action with a higher purpose. Here there is a stress on ritual to help people to think about the divine.

3. *Gnana Yoga* or the path of knowledge: As the person advanced in karma yoga could still lack knowledge and be intellectually lethargic, one must think about God by studying the principles and understanding the scriptures.

4. *Bhakti Yoga* or Path of Devotion. This path engages the intuitive powers as well as the emotions to intensify the direct relation to God. This includes the many devotions which relate to the divine under its many names, to each of which corresponds a special approach to God.

5. *Raja Yoga* systematizing the above, integrates the physical and mental powers in order to come closer to the still mind.

Above all through devotion, knowledge and direct attention one comes to the pure and still mind in which the presence of the divine self is experienced as the basis of one's being, awareness and happiness. This Self indeed is Existence (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*) and Bliss (*ananda*) itself.

In this regard the Buddha in a reform movement would add the "non self" at the top. Building on perception, with charity to all and concentration that leads to insight, he would stress wisdom that brings us to nibbana. Here all objects, even self, fall away so that via "thinking with thinking" on the impermanence of all one goes beyond self to "thinking without thinking" in that stillness of mind that is non-self. However, as the limited mind inevitably begins to conceptualize and limit even this "non-self," Shankara restated Hinduism a thousand years later in order to reaffirm the essentially affirmative and thus limitless character of the *sat-cit-ananda*. This interplay of affirmative and negative may be inevitable unless one transcend into a truly mystical state of consciousness.

It will be noted that Hinduism is not only a matter of the highest speculative thought, but also a positive, progressive and inviting path that can start wherever one finds oneself and asks only that one take the next step. One moves easily from one's various experiences of suffering to prayer, which leads in turn to desire for greater awareness of the divine through meditation. The soul vibrates with the divine in one's body and even with the non-self beyond any of the delimitations that might be included in Self.

To this corresponds the middle way or path articulated by the Buddha in his reformist attempt to restate the true essence of Hindu spirituality, namely, right understanding and right speech (which is wisdom); right action and right effort (which is precept); and right concentration and right mindfulness.

### **What Can Hinduism Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?**

Hinduism is marked by four characteristics:

(a) *Comprehensive*: Hinduism has always been known for its capacity to encounter, absorb and transform a great variety of religious inspirations and efforts. While each tradition makes a contribution, Hinduism has the capacity to draw upon each to enrich both itself and the others. It is conscious that these are many different ways to the divine or, as it says, many different streams and rivers all of which flow into the sea. Thus in Hinduism the ascetic, the devotee and the meditator all find their proper place. Indeed it might be noted that during the 700 years India has been under colonial rule, its religion has managed to absorb and adjust, but through it all to maintain its identity.



(b) *Systematic*: Hinduism also contributes a systematic approach to meditation, beginning from the enlivening of one's interest, passing through proper practice, and then achieving the still mind in which one's consciousness is opened fully to the divine self or Brahman at the root of one's own self or atman.

(c) *Four ashramas*: In the classical view one is expected to pass through the stages of student, householder and forest ascetic to come to the final state of sunyasin with enlightenment and bliss. Thus all of life, each in its own way, is oriented to the divine.

(d) *Equanimity*: This pervasive orientation to the divine is expressed classically in the Karma Yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita* in which Arjuna is urged to act but without clinging to the fruits of his action. This detachment enables one to focus rather on what dharma directs and hence on what I am required to do as reflecting the divine *sat, cit* and *ananda*, the true sources of the self. In this way One can proceed with true equilibrium in the midst of whatever difficulties are encountered. Thus what rules is not a set of objective commandments, but a developing formation of the self in order that all aspects of one's life be expressive of the divine.

In Buddhism this would correspond to offering up the fruits of action and to acting, not in expectation of these fruits but without desire, doing all out of good will.

### **What Forms of Recognition Does Hinduism Expect from Other Religions?**

Hinduism may be less appreciated in the world because thus far it has flourished only in South and Southeast Asia from India to Indonesia, and in a few places to which Indians have migrated. This may now be changing as, through education, commerce and technological competencies, Hindus develop an ability to play a more prominent role in the world.

Nevertheless old ideas persist so that karma is seen as generating fatalism, rituals are seen as superstitions and idol worship. Kali frightens in her ferociousness and the caste system is read only as a system of economic oppression and exploitation. These misconceptions need to be overcome both by a hermeneutic of application which finds ways of effectively mediating and transforming the ancient traditions in new and ever changing times.

It may well be that with the move beyond the deeply embedded rationalism of modern times and the renewed interest in the spiritual dimensions of life, Hinduism could be of special interest and assistance to those embarking on a spiritual quest or in need of coordination of their powers upon this goal as a practical path to the Divine.

In view of the extreme actions of fundamentalists in all directions, perhaps especially the Sikh's outward appearance has drawn totally unwarranted suspicion. In the global period into which we enter much greater interchange is not only desired and desirable, but inevitable, with its potential for lack of understanding and conflict. There is need for much greater progress in understanding other forms of religions, not least Hinduism and its varied forms.

### **What Are the Interests of Hinduism in Dialogue with Other Religions; How Can They Best Be Implemented?**

(1) *Discussion*: Because of the negative stereotypes that abound, not least regarding the rituals of Hinduism, it is important for people to enter into conversation and dialogue in order to enable others to understand their religious practices and their grounding in beliefs and insights. One impediment to this is the lack of understanding due to which people do not trust each other

sufficiently to be able to take up difficult issues. It is essential then to plan ways of coordinated and in-depth discussion in a more penetrating manner.

(2) *Mutual Respect*: An essential requisite for dialogue is mutual respect. We need to search out what can be done to remedy any deficiencies in this basic foundation for interaction. Here the approach should be neither biased criticism nor indifference, but a cooperative search to enrich the understanding of points of common religious concern.

### **What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with Regard to the Hindu Tradition?**

(a) The historical juncture of *Nostra Aetate* is not that of the medieval crusades, but of the decolonialization period of the 1950s and 60s: independence was attained by India in 1947 and by Nigeria in 1960. Hence it was a time of the recognition of the independence and values of the many cultures of the world. This recognition of cultures and of the importance of their religious roots has been notably deepened since that time and professionally elaborated through developments in hermeneutics. This should be incorporated into a revision of *Nostra Aetate*.

(b) The original *Nostra Aetate* when read by a Christian proclaims a great step forward in recognizing the authenticity and value of elements in the other religions. Yet read by non Christians the way in which this is said can sound rather condescending: recognizing certain elements that are true and good in other religions could imply that the rest is erroneous and even evil. Moreover in relating these elements to Christianity it takes the latter as the integral standard of truth without recognizing the distinctive contribution that can be made by other religions.

(c) In other fields governments and peoples have been at work developing rules which can render more peaceable and fruitful the interaction of peoples in this global age, e.g., the U.N., IMF, WTO, etc. It would be helpful to work out publicly a set of generally accepted norms for religious interaction which could give greater assurance to all of mutual respect and cooperation. This might begin with agreement on the language to be used, or especially to be avoided.

(d) It is a hermeneutic principle that no one comes to a conversation in a completely neutral state, despite the efforts of Locke and others of his time to imagine the mind as a blank tablet. Rather we approach all dialogue through a language, symbol system and heritage replete with the lived experiences and choices of our forebears. In order for this not to be a limitation and bias that generates bigotry we need to recognize it and make it work for us as a principle of insight that provides leverage for yet further insight.

(e) The openness and depth of dialogue regarding how close or distant the various religious traditions might be depends notably on the sense one has of the human person. As we move ahead into more global times with its requirements for interchange of persons and peoples it can be expected that our sense of the human person must advance. Hence the development of dialogue is a matter of leadership not only in building structures of intercommunication, but in enriching the recognition of the perfection of the person in practice as well as in principle.

(f) This will mean being ready to live with real differences rooted in the reality of human freedom and creativity, for we are not automatically transferred by God to a better state, but are called to work out our salvation. Intransigence can erroneously be derived from the recognition of the personal character of one's own religious insights and obligations. One who would enter into dialogue with others must have not only deep respect for the human person in general, but a readiness to respect and promote the uniqueness and freedom this entails on the part of each person in the dialogue.

(g) This recognition of plurality entails in turn that one religion cannot be the other and therefore that what is said by one cannot be the same as that said by the other. This limitation is placed not upon the infinity of the divine which is proclaimed in common, but upon the proclamations themselves which, while true, are never exhaustive. For the Catholic tradition, this is recognized *ad intra* by the very existence of the history of dogma; it needs to be recognized as well *ad extra* with regard to other religions.



# Report on Buddhism

## Introduction

Buddhism is the English term for the teaching of the Buddha or the religion founded by him. Its original name in Thailand is Dhamma-Vinaya or Buddha-Sasana. 'Buddha' is not a proper name, but a title meaning the Enlightened or Awakened One, the bearer of Nibbana which is the highest goal in Buddhism. He was given that name by his disciples when he attained or discovered the Four Noble Truths. His given name was Siddhattha and his clan name Godtama. He was born as a prince in North India in 623 BC. After six years wandering as an ascetic to find a way for the extinction of suffering he realized that asceticism did not lead to wisdom and decided on the "Middle Way," applying reflective thought through conscious meditation. At present Buddhism is spread across the world in two broad traditions: Theravada and Mahayana.

1. The first is *Theravada* (Elders' words) Buddhism, which is also known as 'southern' Buddhism or *Hinayana* (small vehicle in the sense of being a conservative or traditional school) followed by over 100 million people in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Its canonical scriptures are preserved in Pali, an ancient Indian language closely related to Sanskrit.

2. The second is *Acariyavada* (later teachers' words) Buddhism, which is known as *Mahayana* (great vehicle in the sense of being a liberal school) Buddhism. This approach is further divided into two lines as follows:

(1) "Eastern" Buddhism followed by 500 million to one billion people in the East Asian traditions of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Its scriptures are preserved in Sanskrit and Chinese; it has coexisted with Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism.

(2) "Northern" Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhism is followed by over 20 million people in the Tibetan tradition. Its scriptures are preserved in Tibetan and its outlook is broadly that of the eastern Mahayana; its more specific orientation is embodied in the 'Vehicle of the Diamond Thunderbolt' (*vajra-yana*), also known as Tantric Buddhism.

## The Nature and Salient Characteristics of Buddhism

The Spirit of Buddhism (and the Buddha) as a religion has a number of aspects such as truth, art, culture, and philosophy, just as the same mountain when viewed from different directions presents different appearances. However, the main one is Buddhism as a religion, concerned essentially with all human problems and their solutions. It is a religion of action and not of mere belief, it can be measured only by experience and not by argument. The chief purpose of Buddhism is to know things as they are. This essentially implies the fact that the Buddha is purified and perfected in what is called the "Three Trainings" (*tisikkhas*) of "morality" (*sila*), "concentration" (*samadhi*), and "wisdom" (*panna*), and in the 'Three Deeds of the Buddha' (*Buddhacarita*), "compassion for the world," "value placed on family along with his need to depart" and "the beneficent duty of the Buddha." (DhA.III, 441). It is not a system of metaphysics, but rather a collection of truths about life discovered by the Buddha; his enlightenment is not a kind of mystic experience, but a graded mode of action and conduct."

The salient characteristics of Buddhism include that it be:

- *A Religion of Enlightenment*: In contrast to other world religions, Buddhism does not accept the concept of a Creator God, but holds that the world originates in accordance with the law of causation. There is a fixed order or nature of phenomena, a regular pattern of phenomena or conditionality (*paticcasamupada*) (S.II.25). The Buddha realizes the Four Noble Truths not by God's revelation, but by his own effort and wisdom (D.I.22).

- *A Religion of Wisdom*: According to Buddhism, faith is necessary but not sufficient for the realization of Nibbana; it is to be balanced with wisdom. Faith without wisdom is blind and misleading (*sumangalavilasini*, II, 403). "Wisdom is primarily for attaining Nibbana" (S.V.231).

- *A Religion of Rationality*: According to Buddhism, everything in this world functions under five natural laws, namely 'physical law concerned with change of temperature, seasons and other physical events' (*utu-niyama*), 'the biological law concerned with heredity' (*bija-niyama*), 'the psychological law concerned with the work of mind' (*citta-niyama*), 'the law of cause and effect' (*kamma-niyama*) and 'the law of cause and conditions' (*dhamma-niyama*), (DA.II.432). The first four laws are essentially included in the fifth or dhammic law of cause and conditions. The dhammic law is analytically both conditional and non-conditional. The conditional is subject to change and cannot be controlled; but both conditional and non-conditional laws can lead to the non-self (A.I.285).

The Buddha once asked the *Kalamas* not to accept anything by mere reports, traditions, authority of religious texts, logic, inference, appearances, agreement with a considered and approved theory, or seeming possibilities, but to examine each thing for themselves whether it is right or wrong, wholesome or unwholesome, and accept it or give it up when they themselves had understood it. The Buddha went even further to tell his monks that he himself should be examined by them, in order to be convinced about the value of his teachings. The Buddha never wanted the Order of Monks (*sangha*) to depend on him.

- *A Religion of Balanced Development*: As Buddhism preaches the middle way of development, ideal persons are those who achieve four kinds of developments, i.e. 1) physical, emphasizing the development of body as well as its material environment; 2) social, with an emphasis on good relationships with other people, by observing precepts of good conduct; 3) mental, with an emphasis on having good mental qualities such as love and compassion, by practicing meditation; and 4) intellectual, with an emphasis on insight meditation.

- *A Religion of Democracy*: Buddhism leaves to each the freedom to judge for oneself whether a view is right or wrong. One must tread the path to liberation by oneself. Buddhism emphasizes three democratic principles, namely liberty, equality and fraternity. First, the principle of liberty is emphasized by Buddhism through freedom of thought, speech and enquiry. Secondly, the Buddha was the first teacher to raise a voice against the caste system and to preach social equality for all. The principle of fraternity is clearly stated by the Buddha when he advises people to cultivate loving kindness and compassion towards their fellow-beings.

- *A Religion of Peace*: Peace is the main teaching of the Buddha "There is no higher happiness than peace (*natthi santi param sukham*)," (Dh.202). The meaning of peace here is Nibbana. The Buddha always instructs his followers to be patient towards others and not to turn to violent means to solve conflicts: "Conquer anger with love; conquer evil with good; conquer the miser with

generosity; and conquer the liar with truth," (Dh. 223). Cultivate and spread unlimited loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity towards others (D.II.196).

Although there are some differences in their external practices such as rituals and ceremonies, both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism maintain the following main teachings of the Buddha:

1. belief in the Triple Gem: Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha or Disciples;
2. belief in the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering and non-self;
3. belief in the doctrine of dependent origination and Nibbana;
4. belief in the doctrine of kamma and rebirth;
5. belief in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Paths; and
6. analysis of the human into the five aggregates and twelve bases.

### **What Can Buddhism Hope to Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?**

The teachings peculiar to Buddhism are the concepts of 'non-self' (*anatta*) and 'insight meditation' (*vipassana*).

*Non-self (Anatta)*: Usually people cling to beauty, feelings, perceptions, thinking, planning and consciousness. By analyzing this we see that the person is a conscious continuity in flux. Meditating on this the Buddha could not find a self.

In contrast to Hinduism's central concentration upon the Self, Buddhism is the only religion that preaches the doctrine of 'non-self' (*anatta*) in Theravada Buddhism or 'emptiness' (*sunyata*) in Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha's reasons for denying the self are centered on the analysis of the nature of human beings.

The true idea of man in Buddhism is that of 'a psycho-physical complex' (*nama-rupa*). On the one hand, this is conditioned and determined by what is called an antecedent state in the process of 'becoming' (*bhava*) in which both action (*karma*) and reaction (*karmaphala*) play an essential part in the development of the personality. On the other hand, as perceived from within and without, man is analyzed into a collection of 'five aggregates' (*pancakkhandha*) of changing elements, namely, looks, sentiments, perception, mental pre-dispositions, and acts of consciousness such as remembering, thinking and so on. The first pertain to 'matter', but the last four are termed 'mind,' and are collectively called *nama-rupa*. Another classification of humans distinguishes cognitive faculties and the different categories of objects.

Buddhism regards human life in its reality as composed of the constituent "five aggregates", which when combined are spoken of as the "chariot" or "car"; e.g. when, these five aggregates are present, we use the designation "man" or "being" (SN,I,135). Generally speaking, the purpose of analysis is to enrich the understanding of man about that which he has not yet achieved — technically called the non-self.

*The Four Noble Truths*. The first, called suffering, is the nucleus around which the remaining truths assemble. The first truth includes all the problems of life comprising birth, old age, disease, death and despair: life is a burden; to be is to suffer and the only way out consists in going out of existence. Suffering is thus the essence as well as the destiny of man. Its most important factor is the inherent 'impermanence' (*anicca*) of man and things; there is only Becoming (*bhava*). This replacement of the Upanisadic idea of Being by that of Becoming and the view of the universe as

an uninterrupted and varied stream of momentary particulars is the distinct contribution of Buddhism to Indian religious thought.

The second noble truth is that the cause of suffering is ignorance (*avijja*) that makes man cling to the sense of his ego and through it to the world. This truth includes the law of cause and effect (*paticcasamuppada*) and the immutable law of *karma* and rebirth.

The third noble truth is that by stopping the operation of the cause of suffering, it is possible to uproot suffering. This is Dependent Cessation, otherwise called *Nibbana* or *Nirvana*.

The fourth noble truth is that to achieve complete freedom from suffering ignorance must be uprooted, and one becomes a perfected person or *Arahant*. This truth suggests the Middle Way (*Majjhimapatipada*), comprising the eight constituents of the Noble Path, further organized into the 'Threefold Training' (*tisikkha*) as a short practical way.

*Anti-speculative attitude:* the Buddha is an ethical teacher, a reformist, a revolutionary and a reconstructionist, but not a metaphysician. The message of his enlightenment reveals to man the way of life that leads beyond suffering. When the Buddha was asked about such metaphysical questions (*avyakatapanhas*) (DN,I,187-188), as 'whether the world is eternal' (*sasato loko*), 'whether the soul is identical with the body' (*tam jivam tam sariram*), and so on, he avoided discussing them as entangling oneself in the net of man-made theories (DN,I,44). All these metaphysical problems can be understood by analysing the doctrine of *Paticcasamuppada* or the Four Noble Truths; the Buddha analysed only the things that are real, rather than merely apparent.

*Human nature:* Buddhism regards the human being as superior to all and entirely different from other animals with regard to mentality. According to Buddhism, there are three 'immoral roots' (*akasalamula*) which plague humanity, namely, lust (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), which are regarded as the original causes of ignorance (*avijja*). The real nature of an ordinary man is always entangled with impurities (*kilesas*) and worldly pleasures, and he is always guided by ignorance.

In support of doing good, avoiding evil and purifying one's mind (DN,II,49), the Buddha preached the Middle Path as the best way for humanity. His five characteristics are: being non-credulous, knowing the uncreated, severing all ties, putting an end to opportunity, and removing all desires. In short, man is defined by his actions – what he did, what he is doing, and what he will do. Hence, his nature is conditioned by his own action or *kamma*. The main purpose of the Buddha's denial of the self is to enable his disciples to shed clinging to the self, for so long as clinging to the self in any form persists, there can be no real liberation.

*Insight Meditation:* In Buddhism, there is both similarity and difference with such Christian mystics as John of the Cross. They would agree heartily on the need to eliminate clinging for it reflects an illusory self made up of feelings, desires, and the multiple distractions, such as TV and the continual flow of the passing phenomena or new happenings called "news".

Under these ephemeral illusions and the illusory self they constitute, however, there is a person who in contrast to the illusory self could be called a "nonself," but who in relation to God's creative grace is "made truly to be or to exist in the Divine image. The Christian might also speak of "non self" in the sense that God is the self in me, and what I interpose between me and Him must ultimately be non real: "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me" wrote the Apostle Paul. Insight meditation is needed in order to recognize this.



The thrust of Buddhism, as with Hinduism, is to recognize the illusory character of all that stands in the way of such deeper awareness. Buddhism would extend this even to disputes over the nature of God, nibbana, etc. as modes of attachment. Only insight meditation can enable one to be aware of the non-self. This implies that the proper path is not one of high theory leading to speculative understanding in which we grasp the truth, but one of practice opening to living non attachment and emptying oneself. (See appendix I.)

*Discussion:* An Orthodox Christian noted the importance of understanding the person as an hypostasis which cannot be defined as matter and spirit, but nirvana goes further and is a negation of any self. The teaching of non self is beyond self as body or mind or any combination of the two. This is required in order to let God be God, in which light there is no difference between denial and affirmation of the divine self. In as much as self has any inherent delimitating or differentiating character these must be denied in order to open the mind and heart to the divine as being all in all.

An African noted that the mind of his people is strongly sensible to being part of a whole, but has difficulty in speaking of non-self. What is characteristically African is to be an active self. Yet there is in this some similarity to the constantly changing Buddhist pattern of the five aggregates. African culture has perhaps a sense of the non self in its awareness of God as beyond the empirical self or atman. Thus forgetfulness of self (*samsara*) becomes nirvana Theravada Buddhism would strongly emphasize the ephemeral character of all the components of the world, each of which is not ultimately different, but only a different proportion of the same five elements. Our ultimate witness to this is silence.

African approaches to this lie in the African sense of community and its rejection of sin and evil as assertions of the self which are disruptive of the community and of the value placed on retaining one's equanimity in the face of adversity, e.g., should one's possessions be lost or stolen.

A Chinese participant saw similarities to Daoism in the Buddhist elements of detachment, overcoming of self, compassion and loving kindness, and in the way God, nature and man are integrated in a manner that enhances the quality of life.

A number of participants noted that death is a major issue for all religions, each of which responds in its own way. Buddhism would respond by insight meditation which takes one beyond the conventional sense of self as body and mind which is subject to death and opens upon the non-self which is not effected by death. The proper practice of the three domains leads one to the extinction of the wheel of life and to the state of the noble person:

1. *Morality:* The virtuous person must refrain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling lies and taking intoxicating drinks. Malpractice in these ways exterminates the roots of one's humanity.

2. *Concentration:* This means single-mindedness; it is bliss, peace and power of mind. Concentration meditation will lead one to tranquility of mind.

3. *Wisdom:* Wisdom or understanding means knowledge and insight of the real nature of things. It is understanding of things as they really are. This is the final step of *Buddhism*, for only wisdom can penetrate and eliminate the root cause of desire and ignorance and the more subtle types of defilement. Therefore, wisdom is regarded as penetrative knowledge, i.e. to penetrate into suffering, its origin, its extinction and the path leading to its extinction. The two main kinds of insight meditation are: 1. *Tranquility-leading-to-Insight:* in this process the mind is singularly pointed from the outset at the potentiality of some objects of meditation; and 2. *Insight-Leading-to-Tranquility:* here the meditator, depending on wisdom, considers the nature of things in respect

of impermanence and so on. Then his mind, released from the mental-objects, becomes centered on insight into the Noble Path.

In sum we may say that the Buddha's teachings can be classified into three categories, phases or aspects: reformation or reinterpretation, revolution and reconstruction.

1. Under the category of *reformation*, the Buddha rejected the caste-system, immolation-sacrifice, austerity, and self-mortification. Being moved by human suffering he renounced the world, eradicated inequalities and established human dignity. His purpose was not to destroy the old social order, but to reform it.

The Buddha did not deny that there were Brahmins in the world, but held that a person could be called 'Brahmin' only because of his virtue (*Dharma* or *karma*) and not because of his birth (*jati*). Women's emancipation had an important place in Buddhism. Women were admitted to the *Sangha* on an equal basis along with men; both had equal rights.

He rejected immolation-sacrifice in which many kinds of animals were killed. But he was in favour of a sacrifice in which blood was not shed and which taught people to perform non-violent sacrifices such as regular charity and observing the five precepts. He saw self-sacrifice as more powerful than all the ritualistic sacrifices.

2. As *revolutionary*, the Buddha brought about a total and radical change in some aspects of the traditional beliefs. The doctrine of 'permanent self' (*Atman*), for example, was rejected and replaced by the doctrine of 'non-self' (*Anatta*), the Hindu yoga by Insight Meditation, and sensual indulgence and self-mortification by the Middle Path.

The Buddha strongly condemned the religious austerity which was a common practice among the Brahmans and the Jains; he recommended the simple life and strict self-restraint. He found virtue in the 'Middle Way' (*Majjhimapatipada*). By avoiding the extremes, Buddha gained perfect knowledge of the Middle Path to *Nirvana*. Buddhism denies all kinds of permanent souls (*atman*), but accepts the doctrine of *Anatta* is based on the analysis of the five *khandhas* in the *Anattalakkhana-Sutta* (DN,II,100). The denial of the soul is said to be opposed to the doctrine of *Atta*, which is propounded by Upanisadic thinkers who believe the soul to be "autonomous", that is, the "inner controller of name and form." The Buddha asserts that what is apprehended as "self" or "*Atman*" is only an illusion. When man is mentioned by the terms *ayatana* 'sense-fields' and *dhatu* 'elements,' he is to be analysed on the basis of his physical and mental environment. The doctrine of *Atman* is, therefore, superseded by the doctrine of *Anatta*.

3. As *reconstruction*, which is the most important interpretation, the Buddha discovers a new 'truth' (*sacca*) called the Four Noble Truths, the Dependent Origination, 24 relations and so on. The doctrine of the Four Noble Truths enumerated by the Buddha in his first sermon is the most basic, profound and original, for which he deserves to be called the Buddha, the Enlightened One. It is apparent that the Four Noble Truths are nothing but gradual self-development with the aim of breaking away from *karma* and *samsara* to the state of *Nirvana*.

Buddhism is a religion of reason as well as of salvation. Whatever is found in reason and is in accordance with objective truth, no matter who stated it, was never rejected by the Buddha.

### **What Forms of Recognition Do Buddhists Expect from Other Religions?**

The above mentioned salient features of Buddhism should be recognized properly for the purpose of mutual understanding, collaboration, and peaceful co-existence with each other. Many ritual practices or ceremonies can be understood also by non-Buddhists.

Normally in Thailand, all Thai Buddhists observe the custom of offering food to monks and attending the *Upasatha* service. Everywhere one is expected to live in accordance with the five precepts, revere the monks, and mark the annual cycle through the four festivals of Songkran, Visakha Puja, Vassa and Kathin.

Other important ceremonies proper to Buddhists are:

1. Morning Alms Round: Monks on their early alms round are not "begging", but rather offering an occasion for common folks to gain merit in the only way they can afford.

2. Thot Pha Pa: This tradition dates back to the time of the Buddha when monks were expected to use cast-off cloth. To help the monks in their search for usable cloth, devotees present saffron robes and other essential commodities to the monks.

These ceremonies and actions may be organized at any time of the year to raise much needed funds for the poorer monasteries in remote areas of the country.

3. Thot Kathin: In this ceremony the assembly of monks elects a deserving and respected colleague to receive the robes. This ceremony is carried out by lay people who support the monks who have spent three months in a particular residence to concentrate on meditation and dhamma studies.

4. In Thailand, the word 'Sanghrajā' (Supreme Patriarch) is used to address the highest position of all senior monks and should not be applied to Christian priests.

### **What Are Its Interests in Dialogue with Other Religions; How Could They Best Be Implemented?**

Buddhism is open to dialogue with all world religions. This activity is known in the Buddhist context as dhamma discussion and in the Buddha's time all were encouraged to engage in it with both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

Buddhists can collaborate with Christians in various types of sincere dialogue. The spirit of dialogue implies the principles of reverence, tolerance, understanding, and freedom. It was evident in the dialogues of the Buddha and in King Asoka's attitude to other religions. In the Asoka's time, one finds a happy combination of openness to other faiths and commitment to one's own; a willingness to promote what is the best in other faiths and a passion to propagate one's own faith. As is written in the Rock Edict (XII):

King Piyadarsi honors men of all faiths....The faith of others all deserved to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. ...For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another's because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it, he seriously injures his own faith. Therefore, concord alone is commendable, for through concord men may learn and respect the concept of dhamma accepted by others.

Dialogue of life and action are most desirable in a situation of religious pluralism for mutual understanding and enrichment, for dispelling suspicion and prejudices, for harnessing moral and

spiritual values to eradicate social evil, and for promoting social justice. (See Appendix II: rules for dialogue.)

### **What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with Regard to the Buddhist Tradition?**

Some attitudes and policies for collaboration as set forth by the Second Vatican Council should be revised, for example: "The most profitable collaboration will be the work which our experts will carry out with the texts and with the Buddhist book so as to absorb the good elements into the local Christian culture." This can lead to misunderstanding between the two religions if "absorb" is taken as stealing from Buddhism or as an adjustment of Christianity in order to attract converts.

It is difficult for non-Christians to accept the wording of the Second Vatican Council that: "Those who through no fault of their own are still ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church yet sincerely seek God and, with the help of divine grace, strive to do his will as known to them through the voice of their conscience, those men can attain to eternal salvation." This would appear to dismiss the significance of Buddhism or of other religions if salvation is possible despite, rather than through them.

In addition, clarification is needed for certain texts on Buddhism in the book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* by Pope John Paul II (edited by Vittorio Messori, New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1994) in order for a future *Nostra Aetate* to be a guideline for interfaith dialogue.

Continued participation by Christians in Thai traditions, as in past decades, will help to create mutual understanding between followers of the two religions. One significant issue might be proper to this interchange. "Leader" is a relational term that depends on "followers." It has been the pitfall of some religions that they function only in terms of leaders and hence are less open to dialogue and overactive in proselytizing. However it seems more appropriate and proper to share with others one's awareness of the good and of how to attain its—for Christianity—"good news". This suggests the importance of shifting the focus from works of conversion to works of enablement centered on helping people to overcome selfish feelings, to understand true happiness which is the true life, and to develop this quality of life.

If this becomes the project then the intent of the Buddha and the Christ are not alien. Indeed Christ said his father had sent him so that all might have life and have it more abundantly. Future Catholic teaching and documents should be concerned to assure that this convergence is recognized and built upon for the proper enrichment of all in order that the quality of the life of humankind be enhanced.

Correspondingly Buddhists would say that dharma belongs to everyone, not only to Buddhists, and that dharma can be lived only with sincerity. Hence we need to overcome the grasping and clinging whereby we try to protect ourselves against others by our knowledge, or by belief that we are more intelligent, and that we belong to God. We need, instead, to let go, to avoid contrasting ourselves with others, and to seek how we can help each other to a deeper spiritual awareness.

*Discussion:* For this it was suggested that H.G. Gadamer's notion of a fusion of horizons could be helpful. One participant suggested that, from his own non-religious perspective, all religions appeared to be the same and to be bent upon the same high minded mission. Gadamer's suggestion of a fusion of horizon means not at all, to abstract from difference as unimportant, but rather to recognize that everyone begins in one's own religious and cultural traditions, and that it is in meeting others that one is enabled by them to delve more deeply into one's own tradition to bring

forth more of its truth. In coordination with a similar dynamic on the part of the others all can move forward in a richer fusion of their horizons.

Any claim by a tradition to be complete must be accompanied by a radical obligation to mine its potentialities and bring forth treasures that are both old and new. Any tradition that speaks of the ultimate self must realize the superhuman epistemological task of overcoming the limitations by which we frame our concepts, just as any tradition that would speak in terms of non-self must face the metaphysical task of unveiling the meaning essential to the quality of life. The fusion of horizons somewhere beyond self and non-self may be a goal to which one can point but never clearly express. Hence before this fusion one must stand in humble silence. Fortunately to live with others is essential to one's nature as human and to dialogue with others in this global context can point to eternal light and happiness.

But if now we must attend to living, we know also, as Heidegger noted, that our temporal being is characteristically moving toward death. Hence, we must live more deeply than our temporal life, for in dying to self we resurrect to life eternal. The question perhaps is how to exchange and enrich this language of death and resurrection which *is* the essential imprint of the Christian faith in a fusion of horizons with Hindus who speak and live so deeply the sense of Self and with Buddhists who seek an equally rich sense of the non-self. The utter disaster for humankind would be for any of these to lose their unique religious sensibility; the great prize now possible in our global age is a fusion of horizons in which each might have life and have it more abundantly.

In conclusion, the Second Vatican Council document, *Nostra Aetate*, is an initial affirmation of the importance of dialogue and of positive regard for other religions. It shows broad-mindedness in Christianity and helps human beings of different faiths and the world to exist with each other peacefully. This truth is also proved by the preamble of UNESCO: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

Buddadasa Bhikkhu, who is recognized as the Nagarjuna of Thailand and the Socrates of Asia, said it well:

If, however, a person has penetrated to the fundamental nature (*dhamma*) of religion, he will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although he may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, he will also say that essentially they are all the same. If he could go to a deeper understanding of dhamma until finally he realizes the absolute truth, he would discover that there is no such thing called religion, that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam" (*Me and Mine*, 1989, p.146).

Whatever be said of silence regarding this absolute truth, today we find ourselves on the road (*in via*) thereto. In this global age it is now possible and indeed urgent that we realize also that the pathways of other pilgrim peoples are convergent with our own. We must and can resonate with the sacredness in their holy chants, and value the holy wisdom of their sacred texts for this is the new dialogue that leads to true liberation and perpetual peace.



## **Report on The Jewish Religious Tradition**

### **What Is the Nature of Judaism and What Are Its Salient Characteristics?**

A particular concern at the present time is that Jews be looked upon not as objects (i.e. merely in terms of category of Christian or Jew), but as persons of faith, as subjects or as persons. This has been developed extensively by John Paul II in his *The Acting Person* and by Joseph Soloveitchik in his writings on person and community. The rationalist powers of conceptualization are not adequate to appreciate this. There is need for a richer experience of self in relation to the other and of my neighbor to me, not merely as sharing in humanity, but as another unique I. Here one experiences and indeed participates in the humanity of the other. This can be seen through the changed experience of a person when, feeling lonely and alienated in a crowd, he or she is recognized by another; this is not a matter of mere physical identification, but brings forward the existential import of a quite unique and irreplaceable person. In this existential light it is particularly important to appreciate Judaism not as an object, but as a people proceeding through history along their special path to God.

Unfortunately, the word "pharisee" has taken on a negative connotation, probably due to the critique found in the New Testament. It reflects, however, the effort of one of some seven groups during the first century to implement the Torah in everyday life. Their concern was not only the law, but how to act so as to implement the law in the life of the community (*Hilaha*). To be religious is not only adherence to "a belief system," but a way of "being and going," a journey or special way of life – or, perhaps even better, life as a way, a path, a pilgrimage in the context of a divine covenant.

### **What Can Judaism Hope to Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind**

The Jewish sense of specialness may have deeper roots, however, and be more revealing. Overwhelmingly most Jews live in Christian lands and hence tend to think of themselves especially vis a vis Christianity. Yet this is true also of Islam which has always thought of itself in relation to – or competition with – Christianity. Thus the relationship to Christians rather than with other peoples takes up disproportionate attention and concern.

The fact that today we live in a global world makes attention to, and concern for, others especially important. It is widely appreciated that Jewish people are philanthropic and importantly concerned for the welfare not only for their own community, but for the poor and needy. This is true not only on the local level but on the international level as well, as witness organizations similar to "Doctors without Borders".

Yet it is striking that this is done not with a formal religious intent, but rather on a more secular basis. The sense is not so much that of doing God's work, as it is that being of service to the poor and suffering is what a Jew does precisely as a member of the Jewish people. The religious motivation may be more in the background than in the foreground. Religion is not absent here because the Jewish people consider themselves to be a people precisely through their relation to God which they live according to the covenant. That is, though Jews serve others on the basis of being part of this people rather than by divine command, this people is ultimately conscious of being formed by God's special providence.

Fundamentally, this may relate the fact that while a person is a Christian by conversion, one is a Jew by physical generation. Hence the charity of a Jew is community based and in observance of its rituals, rather than a direct matter of belief in God. As a result dialogue can be more a matter of political interaction between communities than of theological concern.

This has immense implications for the relations between Jews and non Jews. Failure to understand this has generated throughout history a persistent perception of Judaism as not only a closed community but poorly related to others. If interpreted only in political terms, the reinstitution of a Jewish state then forces extremely important decisions regarding its identity and role in the world along a whole spectrum from medical service at one end to international strategy at the other. In contrast, Jewish exceptionalism is founded on the covenant of God with His special people. To reduce the interpretation of its meaning to politics can generate its profound misreading, vastly complemented when implemented through the coercive power of a state, rather than by the power of charity. The success of the theophany to Moses in negotiating the increasingly perilous path of global times must be a matter of the gravest concern to all.

### **What Does the Jewish Community Expect from Other Religions: What Form of Recognition?**

What Jews expect of others is recognition not as objects, but precisely as subjects of faith. In this emerges a sense also of the other as a unique person for whom I have responsibility. Martin Buber noted that it is only in such a recognition of the other as a "thou", rather than as an "it," that one comes alive; one then exists no longer as a thing or an object, but as a person. In recognizing the other as a "thou" rather than as an "it," I too become a "thou". In religious terms this is recognition of the other as a believer who lives this belief in everyday life. It is the first stage of recognition.

Indeed, this may be broader than we think. For it is not only the call by Jews that they be seen as persons of faith, but a call for recognition from others as well. Often those of other faiths sense in both Christianity and Judaism an attitude of superiority. E.g. stress upon the uniqueness of the holocaust can generate in other Eastern European a sense that their sufferings in the Second World War are not adequately appreciated by Jews.

The second stage of recognition is theological dialogue. For historical reasons such as was manifested, e.g., in the Inquisition, there has been some hesitation regarding theological discussion among the Jewish population. Moses "Maimonides" treated the particular characteristics of such discussion in the context of persecution. This has been transmitted to contemporary political thought through the writings of Leo Strauss on Moses Maimonides, e.g., his "Persecution and the Art of Writing."

More recent discussion has turned especially to the clarification of language. This includes two special foci:

One is the discussion of evil in our times. In response, e.g., to the killing of 30,000 in Argentina, as well as in Peru, Central America, South Africa, etc., reconciliation commissions have been at work on evercoming these negative memories through solidarity with others. The attention of the Jewish population to the holocaust is struggling in this regard with how to remember without remaining forever entangled in this evil.



Second, we are confronted with the difficult challenge of the inability of science and the economy to solve the problem of hunger. Here the testimony of the people of God is needed by service without ideological overlay.

The third stage of recognition is religion as lived in daily life. This is not only the rituals at formal points of transition, but pervades all circumstances and consists in the search for inner purification and for truth. This builds on the previous stages of recognition of the other's faith commitment, and follows with a meditative dimension in response to God's special call to proceed in depth into a shared search for God's presence marked by hope.

This is not a syncretism or mixing of symbols which produces a third that obscures the path of each and leads to confusion. Nor is it a sporadic engagement with others. Rather, it is a recognition that God is beyond all. Here what is important is belief in God and action in terms of this belief. This underscores the importance of the ethical and the ritual in perceiving the presence of God and seeing both self and other as persons of faith.

In dialogue it is certain that the negative, even tragic, experiences of the past will emerge. It is important not to forget these realities and to be warned on the many ways in which people can be turned into objects. Yet history is above all a movement into the future which will call for all the positive powers of faith.

In this light one begins to see today renewed attention to the covenant which entails the lasting assurance of God's goodness, protection and providence. It is upon the stability of this relationship that one can build hope. This, rather than dwelling upon past tragedies, promises to provide the supportive narrative for the coming generation. It was suggested that if the European memory is too powerfully impacted by the tragic history of the holocaust, the American Jewish community might be better positioned to take this turn to hope.

But dialogue may call us further still. For it requires that we not only avoid considering the other as an object, but find him or her to be a friend. It is this deep personal relationship that opens dialogue for only friends can truly enter into dialogue.

In the past one difficulty has been that Christians looked at themselves as a more faithful continuation of Judaism, which thereby is placed in an inferior position. It was suggested that a more proper perspective would be not to look upon Christianity as a branch of Judaism, but to see two branches of Judaism, namely, one, Rabbinic Judaism predicted upon commenting on the Talmud; the other, Christianity understood in terms of Jesus as linking God to humanity.

In this light mutual influence can be expected between Christianity and Judaism. Indeed it would appear that not only have Jewish customs been inherited and integrated into Christianity, but that Christian elements are found in contemporary Jewish practice as well.

Each then should feel free to express their convictions and commitments in the presence of the other without this being taken as an offence. Thus, e.g., Christians should feel able to pray in the name of Christ when sharing prayer with their sister Judaic branch.

### **What are the Interests of Judaism in Dialogue and How might These Best be Implemented?**

Interest in dialogue would appear to be very recent, since 1945 in Europe. Previous history had emphasized contrast and deep opposition between faiths, each defending itself through negative characterizations of the other. After *Nostra Aetate* this has shifted to a recognition of the good that is in all faiths and their positive characteristics. Indeed the difficulty now may be rather

in preserving room for positive proclamation of one's own tradition and creative critique of other religions and of the broad cultures they entail.

It may be too simplistic to search for the basis of this relatively sudden change of almost 180 degrees in any one fact or factor. It could be that the weaknesses of modernity emerged in step with its power. After four centuries, in 1930s the modern ideologies of fascism, communism and colonialism had achieved power universally to oppress the person which the Enlightenment initially had placed on a somewhat unrealistic pedestal. Or was it the emerging awareness of human subjectivity that made the various empires no longer sufferable by mid 20th century? At any rate, if there is a line of continuity in the history of the last half century it is the inexorable step by step affirmation of the person over each of the above ideologies. If so then it is perspicacious to think of the opening of dialogue as built on friendship for others in their basic pathways of faith. This was a point of special attention by John Paul II even before his Pontificate. It could provide the key to construction of a positive new pattern of cooperation between faiths and the persons and peoples who profess them.

### **What Might a Revised *Nostra Aetate* Say with Regard to Judaism?**

1. As noted above, it should focus on the recognition of people in other religious traditions not as objects, but as persons of faith and children of God.

2. It should provide guidance similar to the document of the U.S. Bishops on how to present the passion and death of Christ in a manner that does not incite enmity against the Jews.

3. It would be appropriate to invite the Jewish community to write its own *Nostra Aetate vis a vis* Christianity. This would not be a document of Jewish theology, but an understanding of how Christianity and Judaism are part of the unfolding of God's plan.

This is not to suppress the differences between the religious communities, but to suggest that we must remain ourselves while focusing precisely upon members of other religious communities as persons of faith proceeding along their own path to the Holy Mountain after the image of Isaias. Here the emphasis is not on opposing theological imperialisms, but upon each religion as an experience of God that inspires all facets of daily life.

## **Report on Islam**

Present times are increasingly marked by violence and hatred that destroy the lives of millions. Religions need to contribute to peace by directing the mind and heart to the One who is the principle of unity and the motivation of justice and charity. This is the foundation for combating poverty, racism and prejudice across the world; it is the urgent inter-religious context for the following questions.

### **What Is the Nature of Islam and What Are Its Salient Characteristics?**

Islam is the faith of over one billion people spread along the middle latitudes from Morocco and Senegal on the Atlantic, across North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, to Malaysia and Indonesia in South East Asia. Proclaimed by the Prophet Mohammed in Mecca and Medina on the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, in less than 100 years it had spread across the world.

Islam's teaching is based on the Qu'ran as the word of God dictated to The Prophet over some decades and arranged according to the descending length of the Suras or chapters. Also given great attention are the Hadiths — words of the Prophet and his close companions—which present the pattern of life of the early community.

Indeed Islam is best understood not as a set of beliefs or a religion, but as a way of life that shapes both thought and action. It is the interior or depth dimension, the spirit in which life is carried out, whether in homes, civil society or national and international politics. But the focus has been less on the spirit than on the law or fiqh which spells out how one is to relate to others; following the Shariah or Islamic law is considered to be the most secure path in this world and to lead to the next.

In this manner, the spirituality of Moslems is institutionalized and interpreted through universal patterns of pilgrimage, prayer, charity and fasting. This process of interpretation is guided by the Qu'ran as the word of God and by the sayings and practices of the Prophet, his companions and the early community. Some of its modalities are culture specific and schools of interpretation dispute over what is essential and universal. Thus, rules set to clarify a point in one place can cause trouble elsewhere. Intense attention is given to such points of the law as the implications of the command of truthfulness in situations of endangerment and to the roles of the various prophets, including especially Jesus who is highly respected.

In the Middle Ages a major and highly rewarding effort was made to translate into Arabic the classics of Greek philosophy as tools for evolving the Islamic vision. The resulting philosophic effort is marked by such great luminaries in philosophy as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and al-Ghazali in Damascus, Baghdad and Khurâsân and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in Spain. Their work in the 10th and 11th century laid the foundation for the subsequent revival of Latin thought in the West that constituted the so-called "High Middle Ages" of the 12th and 13th centuries. The Islamic literary and scientific production of the age, as well as its religious and political achievements, were so outstanding that Marshall Hodgson in his *Venture of Islam* suggests that world history cannot be understood unless one shifts the focus of one's understanding of this period from Europe to the land stretching from the Nile to the Oxus, with such fabled cities as Damascus, Baghdad, Bukhara and Samarkand. Even after al-Ghazali shifted from the philosophical to the more mystical

path of the Sufis, this intense theoretical intellectual effort did not cease as is witnessed by Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra. Nonetheless, invasions from without and desertification from within made it impossible to continue the sophisticated earlier level of learning and culture.

But the combination of an exalted religious vision and its close integration with the socio-political order has tended to open the way for a series of reform movements repeatedly calling the Islamic communities back to the difficult high standards of the idealized vision of the communities formed by the Holy Prophet, Mohammed. This has led to a history of political turbulence of which the present is not really an exception – one might recall that al-Ghazali's two protectors, the Sultan's Wazir, Nizam al-Mulk and his son, Fakhr al-Mulk, were assassinated. Moreover, at present the external socio-political pressures of a hegemonic Enlightenment liberalism, joined with the sudden development of the oil riches at the traditional heart of Islam, has generated a new period of instability.

As a result, Islam now seeks to find its place in the newly global context in which it meets many other visions of life not only at its periphery, but at its core. In the past Islam has succeeded in bringing its religiously rooted way of life to peoples of many different cultures, but perhaps never has it been so directly challenged as a way of life by other cultures, of which some but not all are religiously based. Certainly the great task of the religions of our times is to interchange their deep insights about human meaning in order to appreciate the interrelatedness of the many peoples and to inspire the generosity of spirit required so that they might be able mutually to enable, complement, and cooperate with each other.

Thus Islam is challenged not only to defend itself against the militant secularism of Western liberalism, but also to help Christianity today to revive its own religious awareness and the devotion it needs in order to be able to inspire Western capabilities to attend to the welfare of all. Conversely Christianity—which has grown up with the Enlightenment that some even consider to be a Christian heresy – is called upon to help other religions to be able to progress without becoming secularized or, to use the terms of Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade, without losing its sense of the sacred and being reduced to the merely profane.

This is the urgent contemporary need for cooperation between religions.

### **What Can Islam Hope to Contribute to the Religious Patrimony of Humankind?**

1. *Family*: There is a special focus on family values and structures, i.e., on relations between members of a family, which is much needed everywhere in these times of decline in family life.

2. *The Sharia or Qu'ranic law*: This is concerned:

- (a) to preserve the right to believe,
- (b) to practice the integrity of each human being,
- (c) to protect the right of human beings to think and to express themselves,
- (d) to affirm the right to earn a living, and
- (e) to protect the land and its resources as gifts of God.

3. *Justice*: This is a special focus for Islamic thought and teaching. It calls all to do justice even if it is to their individual or family's disadvantage. Islam's attention to justice is little appreciated outside of Islam, but can be a major contribution to the concern for justice and peace in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. It focuses upon central issues of human life which can and should be shared by all religions, each in their own way. These include:

- a. the value of all human beings and support for family life,
- b. freedom of the spirit to worship God in a way that strongly knits together the family and community, and
- c. fair distribution of wealth and resources.

In this struggle for justice Islam strongly opposes poverty, racism and militarism. Islam's quest for justice meshes well with that of Martin Luther King, a Christian minister. This is an agenda with which all can cooperate.

There are here, however, two special problems. On the one hand, some note that in the West the change from the classical order focused upon God to the modern order focused upon man was led, not by the Church, but by atheists who rejected God, by secularists who ignored God, or by deists who excluded God from all involvement in matters of the world. They supposed that this separation of the sacred and the profane, of Church and state, is the only path worthy of human dignity. Hence they consider it necessary to suppress Islam's intense religious focus upon Allah in order to refocus upon man. However, it is characteristic of Islam not to separate daily life from worship of God, but rather for fidelity to God and his message to pervade all of life – economic, social and political. To remove this Islamic attention to God in order to shift its focus to man would be foundationally disruptive and destructive of the very mode of human life of this one fifth of humanity.

On the other hand, some express the concern that Islam's stress upon justice could be a source for insistence by various groups on what is their due, in opposition to what others see from their own point of view. They fear that this could be a source of fundamentalism. This, however, supposes that the Islamic perspective would be that of the atomized individual in competition with all others. This is characteristic rather of the nominalist and enlightenment traditions of the West.

But the case of Islam is quite the opposite. The source of its concern for justice, as for all else, is its sense of fidelity to God who has created and disposed all wisely. This is the needed antidote to the West's selfishly egoistic individualism. Of itself Islam is one of the world's most powerful forces for justice with its roots deep within the spirit of persons and peoples. It is when unjustly attacked from without by colonizing military or cultural force that it exercises its right and duty as defined in the Qu'ran to defend its faith and way of life in order to promote justice in this world.

It is the myopia of Western individualism to see democracy as a tool for political participation only in the sense of allowing each to struggle for justice in the sense of what is one's own. It is not lost on Islamic and other peoples that the leading colonial exploiters in modern times have been the world's democracies. If it is essential freely to strive for justice, then Islam must be able to explore its own alternate paths, and its discoveries can be its most precious gift to the world in this time of globalization.

Yet the practice of justice requires a still broader context. If justice as the call for what is due can lead to different interpretations when evaluated from the diverse perspectives of multiple parties, there is a basic need to seek, not only one's own welfare, but that of others and the relation between the two. In Christianity this is manifested in the essential companion to justice, namely, the virtue of charity. This is patterned both specifically on Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and on the shared religious vision of the origin of all in the one Creator, making man the steward or vicegerent for the welfare of all. Though the former is proper to Christianity, the latter is common to both Islam and Christianity. Indeed Jesus is a uniquely highly honored prophet in Islam which sees him and his mother as alone untouched by evil.

4. *God*: Islam's strong focus on God is especially important in these secular times. Islam can help bring God and religion back into the lives of people and, as has just been seen, by that fact support justice as well.

5. *Zakar*: almsgiving emphasizes the importance of responding to the needs of the poor. This perfects justice by taking it clearly beyond the search for one or the other's due to include the norm and modes of charity or love.

### **What Form of Recognition Does Islam Expect from Other Religions?**

1. That Allah be recognized as denoting the same God as that worshiped by the other great religions. Islam stresses God's compassion, love and forgiveness;

2. That the Qu'ran be recognized as legitimate holy Scripture and message of peace, against accusations that it promotes violence; and

3. That Moslems have the right to protect themselves when attacked. Taking care of human concerns, which is essential to world peace, entails the need to resolve conflicts and injustices.

*The Sharia* is the special law of Islam. This must be located within its general religious context that stresses submission and fidelity to Allah, the compassionate and merciful. As with the Jewish Talmudic tradition, intensive study of the sacred texts and traditions is looked to for the guidance needed for living faithfully. This guidance is worked up in legal form so that in both traditions the study of the law, or of "fiqh" in Islam, predominates over what in Christianity would be the study of theology, both dogmatic and moral. Its content reflects the long experience of the community or "umma" in attempting to live in a faithful manner the message of the Prophet.

This approach has two implications. On the one hand, the Islamic community comes into conflict within the legal system of the Western colonizing powers. As the latter is based on the individual and on the rights or claims of the atomized person within the community, Moslems find this to be corrosive of the family and of the social bonds of community. Thus many call for the reinstatement of the Sharia as the legal frame under which they wish to live.

On the other hand, the Qu'ranic Sharia is objected to by some liberal Western elements who attempt to impose upon Islam the post-Reformation secularizing choices of the West. But any new pluralism which would result in the isolation of the sacred from the profane would subvert Islam as a way of life.

Moreover, the stress on fidelity and the long defensive posture of Islam *vis a vis* the Enlightenment leaves Islam with serious hermeneutic problems as to how to interpret its texts and traditions in a way that is both fully faithful and also effective for living its faith today. This requires work not only on hermeneutics, but on a whole series of issues in epistemology, in being and believing, and in ethics. Some efforts are underway to begin to deal with these issues. The Council for Research in Value and Philosophy (RVP) has formed corresponding research teams in Qom and Tehran, as well as publishing some 17 volumes by teams across the Islamic world. It will not do for Islam simply to adopt the Western family ethic, or lack thereof -- e.g., on abortion, divorce, the definition of roles between husband and wife and the education of children, codified in the legal system of the West. Progress for Islam cannot, and should not, be carried out in such alien terms. Yet its work of legal interpretation must be informed by a professional awareness of modern economic, social and political structures and physical sciences. In this light the great traditions of Islamic cultural in philosophy and science need to be transformed and brought forward in new ways for the new issues of our day.

*Jihad* is another issue of general concern which needs clarification. Jihad has two dimensions as reflected in Mohammed's words on the way back from a military encounter. He is reported to have referred to that battle as "the small jihad," observing that ahead lay "the great jihad," i.e., the struggle to build a holy community and the interior personal spiritual transformation that this would require. It seems unhelpful to focus only on the small jihad. But neither is it helpful to deny it or its legitimation in terms of justice when Islam is attacked or threatened with subversion. The two are linked: the great or spiritual jihad supports the small or military jihad in the face of injustice; the small jihad defends the right and ability of the people for the great or spiritual jihad to make their faith a vibrant way of life.

The danger is that this can be oversimplified and that too much energy of too many Moslems will be directed into the tactics of the small defensive jihad. If this were happening only among the uneducated then education might be the cure; this is the interpretation of those who are sure that their liberal ideology is the only correct one. Similarly, if this were happening only among the poor then economic development might be the cure; this is the interpretation of the materialists for whom the economic goods are the sole purpose of life. But the fact is that today fundamentalism comes notably from the well educated and well off, even the wealthy.

Consequently, the problem of jihad would appear to call on the part of Islam for education that is neither simply the transmission of ancient knowledge already acquired nor simply modern learning from the West, but the discovery of a new understanding of how to live faithfully an integral Islam in the contemporary world. The same is true of the Sharia in a world that is increasingly pluralistic due to migration and communication. Only Islam can work out how it is to live today, though others can help.

### **What Is the Interest of Islam in Dialogue with Other Religions: How Could This Be Implemented?**

1. There is a call to dialogue in the Qu'ran.
2. From a legalistic point of view the peoples who have a covenant with the one God, i.e., Moslems, Jews and Christians, are by that very fact mutually engaged. As humans they need to give voice to their shared relationship to God.
3. Christianity has a center in Peter and his successors in the See of Rome to make clear how the faith should be lived today. As Islam has no central authority, it must be engaged in philosophical and interreligious dialogue across the board in its institutes and centers of learning and with other religions and their cultures. Such an open network is possible today given the modern modes of communication, travel and publication on the web as well as in print. For example, the 150 volumes written by the research teams in the various cultures (including 17 from Islamic centers) and published by the RVP are sent to 350 libraries across the world. The entire series, "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change" is constantly available on the web in complete text and without charge ([www.crvp.org](http://www.crvp.org)).
4. Today the socio-economic challenges are global and involved with the interaction of peoples on a broad scale. Thus, whether it be poverty in Africa or domestic violence in other places there is need for cooperation and hence for dialogue between civilizations and cultures, and especially between the religious traditions in which they are grounded. Moreover, dialogue is a matter not only of word, but of action. Thus, one might consider a council or coalition with the power to implement shared projects. This joins the call from the Hindu community above for an

agreed upon set of guidelines. One specific suggestion was to consider the feasibility of an international campus for the in-depth comparative study of religions in order to help form leaders from all religions over a 4- to 5-year course of study.

5. It is essential to work on points of conflict, such as the Arab-Israeli war, and conflicts in Kashmir and Sudan. Religions have been used to generate conflict and often are seen as proselytizing and divisive. In contrast, they must bring forward their own properly religious resources to work for peace.

While some religions might want to think of dialogue as an especially intellectual endeavor and indeed the intellectual side is important, it must be remembered also that Islam is above all a religious way of life. If so, dialogue with and by Islam must give greater attention to practice or action. Also, as dialogue, this must be cooperative or collaborative. Some would stress the functional dimension and learn by experimenting and seeing what works. This is very important provided it is not allowed to slip into a 'functionalism' after the contemporary mode whereby all is judged on a utilitarian basis in terms of what produces the greater material or empirical good for the largest number. Rather, it must be judged in terms of what contributes to the formation of a holy community. This is central in Islam.

However, for cooperation and collaboration it is important to know what is the proper contribution of each religion and how this relates to that of others, i.e., what are the complementarities of the different religions in dialogue. This can be learned from practice only if one has a deep spiritual awareness of the religious values engaged. The issue then is not only theoretical, but pertains to the deep meaning of life and hence of religion.

This is the great paradox for the modern mind, namely, that as one grows in holiness one transcends self to open to God and hence to all his creatures. One listens not only to oneself for oneself, but to others as children of God who reflect more of His love and purpose. That is, as one goes more deeply into the life of the Spirit within one's own horizon one transcends oneself to all of creation. The other is no longer alien or opposed as an 'it,' but is a 'thou'. From the religious perspectives, a global "we" can emerge; it is possible to expand the sense of the *umma* and for all to join in its earthy pilgrimage.



## Conclusion

As we enter upon an age of global interaction it is important to understand points of similarity and difference between these religious underpinnings of the various civilizations. This includes not only patterns of belief and harmony which deepen the life of all in God, but also those efforts which contribute to peace. These must manage to overrule the deadly interchanges too often carried out with religious passion.

This conclusion is intended to identify the salient elements which emerged in the consultation regarding the major religions reported above and to begin to build some indications for further work.

We shall begin from the African traditional religions and then consider two pairs: Hinduism and Buddhism, on the one hand, and Judaism and Islam, on the other. This is not meant to heighten contrasts between the pairs but to mine the genetic similarities within them. As present concerns are global, however, the reader is urged to look for points of relationship and to consider the degree and modes in which differences can be complementary.

### African Traditional Religions

While *Nostra Aetate* did not treat African traditional religions it would seem helpful to begin with them. This is not simply a matter of numbers of people who adhere to these religions or are significantly effected by them even in their practice of other religions, but because they reflect today the earliest forms of culture not yet formulated in written form. Indeed it may be one of the more important contributions of Piaget's structural investigations of human development to have pointed out how earlier stages of human growth are not supplanted by, but sublated in, what follows. Thus, Heidegger would consider them not the most impoverished, but the most rich as containing the keys to all that will come after.

In this light African traditional religions might better be considered not only "proto religious" for lack of the written and other forms which mark the great religions, but ur-religious as living more directly, and thereby expressing even to our day, the seminal or root factors on which all religions depend and are attempting to express. This can provide important elements not only for in-depth understanding of the various more developed religions, but keys to discovering the modes of possible convergence not only in the past as constituting their common origins, but in the future as well as constituting their common goals. (See G.F. McLean, *Ways to God* [Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999], especially chapters I and II.)

A basic element shared by the African traditional religions would appear to be a common sense of God as the absolute power and supreme origin of life. All comes from him in the constitution of nature and humankind; this life is seen as flowing from generation to generation in such wise that it constitutes a community, which is the bearer of life. God's power and love flows like a river through the families that successively make up the community, clan and tribe. Hence for a community not to have further offspring means not only the absence of further members of the clan, but as well the definitive death and oblivion of all who came before.

The building of community through marriage, as well as its destruction through sin and evil, therefore are not understood as individual matters between a person in his or her heart and God. They are understood first and foremost in terms of the community which thereby is either built or

destroyed. Sin, in turn, is seen in terms of its destructive effect, not on God who is beyond damage or even directly on particular persons, but on the community.

That the African traditional religions be recognized as legitimate religions is a major concern for those who practice these religions as their major religious commitment. But it is increasingly so also for African Christians and Muslims as well as believing people everywhere as they come to recognize the influence of these traditions in shaping their own religious vision and practice. As religion provides the ultimate base for human dignity, the recognition of the authenticity of these basic religious self understandings and commitments are foundational for the human dignity of billions of people. It is important that this be recognized in future documents.

In response, African traditional religions possess elements crucial for the survival of other religions. One is the direct awareness of the one absolute reality in terms of which all else is understood, another is adaptability. In contrast to religions based on written sacred texts, being held in oral form and communicated from generation to generation these traditions are easily adapted to local, regional and broader changes. This unique level of adaptability may suggest needed qualities for religion in our rapidly changing world.

## **Eastern Religions**

A classical discussion in the Hindu tradition concerns the primacy in religion of word or of action. There is a strong line of argumentation that the human word is inadequate to express the divine and that the origins of religion lie in symbolic, particularly ritual actions. These are especially acts of sacrifice whereby the negation of what is limited points beyond to the ultimate and self subsistent source. Indeed, when later it came to compose the *Vedanta Sutras*, which might be described as the Hindu attempt to compose a *Summa*, the second string or *sutra* (I, 1, 2) describes the Brahma as "that from which, in which, and into which all is." It is characteristic of the Hindu tradition that focus upon this source and goal of all is so religiously intense that it pervades the whole culture providing a sure religious base for all. If one can so purify one's consciousness that its limits and limitations are removed, it will naturally open to, and be fulfilled in, the absolute Self.

Indeed this focus upon the understanding and experience of the divine which is beyond all concepts is so strong that Shankara in his introduction to this text speaks of anything other than the Brahma as "illusion". This is not to say that I am God (although some have interpreted this -- wrongly it would seem -- as acosmic); rather it is to say that what is essential in me is the divine. The great struggles of Hinduism to absorb this basic insight have concerned the relation of the human soul (*atman*) to the divine (*Brahma*) and whether the divine has attributes which would give purchase to human speech regarding God in terms of intellect and will, knowledge and love.

It is unique also to Hinduism to have kept alive from its earliest days a full range of human modes of reflecting the divine. The West moved through stages in reflecting the divine first in terms of physical and sensible attributes, and then in terms of the imaginative composite of mythic gods, before coming to intellectual or more properly spiritual religious statements. In contrast, the Hindu tradition has kept all levels alive and lives them simultaneously. Thus while the ancient *Upanishads* articulate with metaphysical brilliance the essence of the divine, the ritual and forest or allegorical texts to which they are attached are vivid with dramatic physical actions and shine with mythical examples. Even today one approaches the *spartan* simplicity of the lingam, sacred symbol of the unity of life, through temple gates or *gopurams* festooned with writhing pantheons.

The ideal Hindu life is constructed ideally of four stages (students, householder, forest ascetic and enlightenment) all of which mark one's actual life with successive dimensions of the ascetic, the devotional and the meditative. Every action from the very beginning of one's day is ritualized and carries sacred meaning. Each action is important, for all compose one's path to the divine. Hence, each aspect of life must be controlled by yoga which attunes it to its sacred destiny.

Buddhism in effect reformed Hinduism after its rituals had lost meaning or become somewhat perverted by human weaknesses. The Buddha shifted the focus from the absolute Self -- which was supplanted by the "non self" -- to the human part of the religious effort. This was meant not to deny the absolute Self, but not to shape one's life and thought in terms of the Self. The focus was rather on that part of the religious process which has to do with training the human self to let go, to cease grasping all that might prop up the ego by worldly means. This is not simply an abandonment of thought and knowledge, for Buddhism is most attentive to the causal sequence; rather it is to follow a middle path on which all is done in moderation in search of peace and harmony with all and everyone.

There are analogues to this in most cultures. As it is necessary to have powerful physical stimulæ to protect and promote life, it is necessary as well to have ways to control these in order that the human person can live also the spiritual dimensions of his or her life in response to its transcendent source and goal. The Religions respond in various ways:

1. *Buddhism* would consider the self as illusion and attempt to proceed in terms of the non self by living non attachment.

2. *Christianity* would attempt to break through the fog of physical concern in terms of which we live a life of distraction from our true self. In cultures which are of a particularly individualist character this attention to person can be enclosing and restrictive. The religious thrust must attempt to break out and in this the Buddhist religious effort can be particularly helpful. This relates as well to the concerns of Orthodox Christianity to appreciate that the person as an hypostasis and as spiritual cannot be defined. Certainly God must be beyond body and mind, or any combination of the two.

3. *Hindu*. What is meant to be non-self is important for all in opening the heart and mind to God. Indeed in the Indian tradition some theorize successive waves of emphasizing alternately self and non-self. When self and all personal characterizations begin to entail closure so that the absolute is so contrasted to others that it is now presumed somehow to be on the same level, then the terminology of Self must be rejected. But the alternate terminology of 'non self' inevitably faces the same fate of becoming reified by the human mind and hence must eventually be replaced by a 'non non-self', which is a purified 'self' once again. It may never be possible to stop this cycle, but it is necessary and possible to recognize nonetheless that it is dynamized and oriented by constantly adjusting to point consistently to the definitive transcendence and uniqueness of God, who is *sat-cit-ananda*, that is existence, consciousness and bliss.

4. *African religions* reflect something similar in their rejection of sin and evil, especially as assertions of self which are destructive of the community. Hence transcendence of the self is required for human life.

5. *Chinese culture* also emphasizes detachment, overcoming self centeredness and compassion, as well as the integration of God, man and nature as reflected in the use of the one term "Tien". Buddhism would take this integration to the point of searching for the ideal of a cessation of the wheel of life and entrance into the state of *nibbana*.

In all of this effort to overcome self it should be emphasized that the goal is to live. Even if this be stated in terms of the non-self, what is sought is a harmonious life which entails all three of the following: (a) reformation of life rejecting what is repressive, (b) revolution in traditional beliefs in order to regain their true spiritual meaning, and finally (c) reconstruction of life in terms of the four noble truths, etc. with the aim of breaking away from *samsara* to the state of *nibbana*. This could suffuse the religious life of all peoples with essential elements of reverence, tolerance and freedom.

In view of this what then do the Eastern Religions await from others? A first concern is that negative images in their regard be dispelled. Peoples especially marked by pragmatism and rationalism, whether East and West, have found it difficult to appreciate the ritual character of Hinduism and the contemplative character of Buddhism. Indeed Christians too have been harsh on these. In the post modern era when rationalism is in abatement and the hopes for a "brave new secular world" are attenuated, it is time now to come to a new appreciation of the essential ritual and contemplative dimensions of religions.

In turn, Christianity can be, and indeed is being, notably enriched by learning meditative practices from the East. These are no longer seen as strange or irrelevant. Especially, to disparage them in order to promote one's own religion is a fundamental contradiction of any religion.

It is important, moreover, that Christianity bring out the truly religious meaning of the Eastern practices lest in the West yoga and various meditative practices come to be seen simply as profane physical or psychological attunements, rather than as ultimately spiritual integrations of all facets of life.

This, moreover, can be an essential help in overcoming the extreme rationalism and individualism which has come to characterize much of life and to exercise extensive influence through educational, economic and political structures in the process of international and global interchange.

In sum, interchange with the Eastern religions should help toward: (a) mutual understanding and enrichment, (b) dispelling suspicions and prejudices, (c) learning spiritual values, and (d) promoting social justice.

From the above a number of cautions arise for further work in the line of *Nostra Aetate*:

1. It is to be expected that a Christian document will inevitably reflect its point of origin and hence its Christian point of view. Yet H.G. Gadamer notes that this must mean not closure, but rather recognition of a horizon able to be put to work in the task of relating to others. Thus the strong points of Christianity must be noted, affirmed and celebrated, but this must be done in a way that asserts a position without excluding others. Instead analogues should be sought in other religions in order to clarify similarities as well as differences, and to build on complementarities and hence cooperation where they truly exist.

2. In so doing an attempt should be made to avoid making Christianity the standard of truth in a way that implies that all others are *ipso facto* inferior and/or lacking.

3. It was recommended that a set of general rules be developed for interchange between religions which will lessen the danger of misinterpretation or intolerance. This would have some similarities to work done in other areas such as fiscal or trade interchange by the IMF or WTO. Such an agreed pattern would enable cooperation to proceed according to clear and positive norms, and to avoid missteps, misunderstanding and misinterpretations.

4. An effort should be made to identify ways in which diversity in religion can be seen in a positive rather than a negative mode. While the divine is One, what is human is multiple. It can be

expected therefore that religions as human creations and expressing the desire of peoples from diverse civilizations and cultures to honor God will differ one from another. Indeed these diversities in relation to the One should be mutually complementary enabling the human effort to honor God in a richer, deeper way, as does polyphonic music in contrast to a solo, or an organ in contrast to a flute. Nicholas of Cusa had much to say on this. As grace builds upon nature the revelation of Christ can enrich and transform the various religions, *ceteris paribus*, this should be able to be said of the other major religions as well.

5. It was pointed out how delicate can be religious sensibilities and how easily phrases can be misinterpreted. Thus a passage speaking of Christianity as "absorbing" elements from host cultures was interpreted as stealing from them, rather than as recognizing their religious authenticity and contribution. Such sensitivity may be roused as well when documents seek to exonerate persons of other great religions by speaking of them as not recognizing Christ 'through no fault of their own.' This generates the impression that members of those religions are saved despite, rather than through, their religious practices. The work by M. Aydin, *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council* (Washington, D.C.: The Council For Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000 -- [www.crvp.org](http://www.crvp.org)), follows this issue with great care in the documents of the Vatican, of the World Council of Church and related theologians. It is a point in need of the most attentive theological work.

6. Continued work on the human person promises to open the way for overcoming self-centeredness and for appreciating the relatedness that essentially characterizes the person. If applied to interreligious dialogue this could do much to make it possible to see how relations between religions are not a compromise or effort to heal a schism in the one body, but rather a way of sharing and thus expanding the horizons of all the world's great religions.

7. H.G. Gadamer's notion of a fusion of horizons may be helpful here in its suggestion that the way ahead is not to abstract from differences in order to isolate a univocal but impoverished universal, which in any concrete sense would be unlivable. Rather it suggests the search for mutual complementarity until real communion is achieved.

These points entail important and stimulating metaphysical and epistemological challenges. On the one hand, the Hindu view is that the sense of person, and even ultimately of the self, is limiting, which raises the challenge of finding a way to overcome any such limitations. On the other hand, the Buddhist search for the non self is challenged to reveal the positive meaning and quality of this life. This raises the question of whether Hinduism and Buddhism working together could point the way to a fusion of horizons beyond 'self' and 'non-self'. Could this help go beyond the classical Christian conjunction of the *via affirmativa* with the *via negativa* to a better appreciation of the real mystery that has been signaled only as "beyond" the other two by the term *via eminentiae*?

In a parallel manner Heidegger's development of human life as oriented toward death suggest another fusion of horizons, namely, that between the Christian mystery of death and resurrection, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Hindu notion of the 'self' with that of the Buddhist 'non-self'. Can it be hoped that it might be possible to conceive of going beyond these three separate and contrasting perspectives to a fusion of insight in which each would be enriched and true communion might develop? This may well be the major challenge for the theologians of our time.

## **Religions of the Book**

It would appear especially natural to look for similarities of concern between the "religions of the book": Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All are descendents of Abraham, each in succession draws on the providence of God as lived by the faith which precedes it both chronologically and genetically. Truly, they share the one history of salvation with an expanding sense of the covenant by which God's special grace and love for humankind is proclaimed and according to which their adherents attempt to shape and evaluate all aspects of their life.

Representatives of both Judaism and Islam spoke of the need for recognition not as mere objects, but as persons. In view of the tragedies of WWII and of the present time this generic appeal for human consideration is in need of urgent support. Fear was voiced from the Jewish community of becoming so bemired in the evils of the past that these might obscure the special character of this people and condemn all to fear, defense and self protection.

This minimal floor was raised by the observation that progress in the dialogue between religions is not possible unless one can look upon one's partner as a friend. There is special importance therefore in the recognition and promotion of the sense of philanthropy and of its concern for the poor through, e.g., medical service in destitute nations. This sense needs to be broadened to all people especially those who live closer by -- our neighbors. While this may be impossible for humans, all is possible to God. Hence, we are pushed to the properly religious roots of our cultures and their divine inspiration as the basis for living together in pluralistic times.

There may be special difficulty in this which needs to be resolved. It was pointed out that a Christian is such by conversion or basic option, for which reason freedom and doctrine hold a central place in one's life as Christian. In contrast, one is a Jew by birth into a people, so that the proximate focus is upon the people and its life through time. This is a matter most proximately of politics rather than of theology. Over time it may have generated suspicions that the motivation for action in society was primarily political and in terms of the welfare of one's own people over others.

Behind this sense of the one people, however, there is the divine covenant in which they have been chosen, formed into a people, and given the special mission of being a light to the nations. The present egalitarian emphasis renders ambiguous any claim to a special position proper to one's religious identity. This has been immensely complicated by the establishment of a Jewish state with all of the challenges this poses for developing a polity which expresses, rather than contradicts, the obligations of the covenant on the part of the Jewish people.

Hence this suggests the special challenge and opportunity in our times, not only for Judaism but for all covenanted people. Can a people understand its uniqueness not simply in a secular egoistic sense of something made by itself, but religiously as a people of God? If so can it see itself as making a special contribution, which yet is complementary to that of other peoples who also have a special global mission from God.

For example, the proposal was made that Christians and Jews should look at themselves in closer proximity as two branches of Judaism, the one rabbinic as exploring the Talmud, and the other Christian as focused on the special link of man to God in and through Christ.

Islam shares some of these same glories and challenges with a sense of earlier greatness, but also of lack of success. This goes back to the long conflict across Europe from the exclusion of the Moors by the kingdom of Aragon to the end of the Ottomans. For this long period politics was driven by a search not for the distinctive ways of God with his Christian and Moslem children, but for the religious inadequacy of the other. It is now especially important -- and perhaps for the first time possible -- for others to appreciate and revere the full religious inspiration of the Prophet and

the Qu'ran and for Moslems to be recognized not only as a category of believers but as a community of free persons struggling to live religiously in a notably secular world.

As with the Jews this took on a political character. It is not that one had to be born a Moslem, but that Islam is so wholistic a faith that it is better understood less as a doctrine than as a community and way of life. As the talmudic scholars had elaborated the Jewish law, Islam spelled out all aspects of life integrally and intensively in its Sharia. Seen as a divinely inspired integral view of life this body of law has provided the structure of all aspects of Moslem life through the ages. Where Western law has been largely individualist in character and structured to separate the sacred from the profane, the Church from the state, the Sharia is decidedly wholistic and religious in all its modalities.

The general intensification of global interchange with its focus on the oil resources held extensively by Moslem countries has pushed this intensively structured way of life into extensive interaction with other peoples. From the Islamic as well the Hindu discussions, there came a call for an international council to coordinate the interchange and for an international university center for the intensive study of religions.

The goal of this interaction should be neither that of conversion nor of combat, but of peace and reconciliation. In the interaction one encounters perhaps the nub of the present tragedy of Judaism and Islam. Both identify themselves strongly as a people. For Judaism this has the political overtones indicated above. One is that a person is a Jew by birth and belongs to this ethnic group so that the welfare of that group is the primary concern. In a somewhat parallel fashion Islam presents an integrated view of life which extends to the public as well as the private, to the political as well as the economic. Hence, where the two meet they tend to do so as peoples and states, one looking for its homeland, the other defending its claim to rule its land in the name of Allah: Jewish State vs Islamic Republic.

However, the basis for both identities and claims are religious. Hence, attempts to solve the problem in territorial, economic, political or *a priori* military terms cannot offer a basic solution, but promise rather to be counter productive. The root cause here, as in other parts of the world, is the inability of the groups to focus on the religious dimension of the issue of their relationship and hence to treat its real foundations.

It can be expected then that only a combined effort by all of the world's religions can respond to this and other problems. The universal character of Christianity built upon recognition of God's ways with human persons, rather than upon a people or state, may enable it to make an important contribution to overcoming such problems of living religion in a global age.

The way in which the Hindu religion centers attention beyond space and time, that of Buddhism stressing a way of life built not on grasping but on 'non-self', that of Islam focused on justice and that of Judaism founded in covenantal divine providence – all of these together hold the makings of a new attitude. It is that of living as a holy community, not only with others of one's own faith, but with all peoples of all religions.

Since World War II we have the example of great economic and political human constructs focused on the profane. It now becomes evident that humane and religious progress requires that the similar joint project for mutual understanding and cooperation between all religions introduced by Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate* has much and urgent work to do. There is here the potential to do much that is essential for humankind today. In these times of interaction between all peoples such a religiously based global initiative now becomes literally a matter of survival for many, and of peace for all.





## Appendix 1

The *Visuddhimagga* has seven steps of purification for insight meditations:

1. the purification of virtue (*silavisuddhi*);
2. the purification of consciousness (*cittavisuddhi*);
3. the purification of view (*ditthivisuddhi*): here the meditator analyzes his or her body consisting of the five *khandhas*, being the state of flux; one then discovers the truth of the human body;
4. the purification through crossing over doubts (*kankhavitaraṇavisuddhi*) helps one to realize the cause of suffering (*samudaya*);
5. the purity of knowledge and vision regarding path and non-path (*magga-maggānaḍassana-visuddhi*), helps one to know the distinction between the mundane (*lokiya*) and the supramundane (*lokuttara*) form of the Noble Eightfold Path;
6. the purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*patipadānaḍassana-visuddhi*): here one continues the practice of contemplation on the Three Common Characteristics with clarified vision;
7. the purity of knowledge and vision (*naḍassana-visuddhi*), or the knowledge of adaptation (*anulomaṇa*), or the vision of our paths connected with the four holy stages, gives rise to mature knowledge (*gotrabhūṇa*).

Then one becomes a Noble Man (*ariya*), one gradually frees oneself from the three lowest fetters, and is qualified to enter the stream and is said to have become *Sotapanna*. If one wants to attain the higher holy stages of the once-returner (*sakadagami*) and so on, one has to repeat the process of practice from the beginning in the same manner as discussed above. Thus after destroying all the fetters, one attains the state of Arahant hood, which is the final goal of life; this is the state of eternal bliss of the perfect and Noble Person.



## Appendix II

Ten Buddhist ground rules of inter-religious dialogue:

1. The primary purpose of dialogue is to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality and then to act accordingly.
2. Inter-religious dialogue must be a two-sided project within each religious community and between religious communities.
3. Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity.
4. Each participant must assume similar complete honesty and sincerity in the other partners.
5. Each participant must define oneself, for example, the Buddhist can define from within what it means to be a Buddhist.
6. Each participant must come to the dialogue with no fast assumptions as to which are the points of disagreement.
7. Dialogue can take place only between equals, for example, the two sides should not view each other as superior or inferior.
8. Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust.
9. Persons entering inter-religious dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own tradition.
10. Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion from within.

John Dunne speaks of passing over into another's religious experience and then coming back broadened and deepened. See Jutakarn Yothasamuthr, *Inter-Religious Relations: A Comparative Study of Buddhism and Islam in Bangkok, Thailand* (Bangkok: Midol University, 2002), 74. See also Whalen Lai and Michael von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001).



**Appendix III**  
**Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religion**  
**Nostra Aetate**

Paul, Bishop  
Servant of the Servants of God  
Together with the Fathers of the Sacred Council for Everlasting Memory

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her tasks of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth (1). One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men (2), until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light (3).

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgement and retribution after death? What, finally is the ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense. Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ, "the way the truth, and the life" (John 14, 6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (4).

The Church therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth (5), who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes great pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgement when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, alms-giving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this Sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ — Abraham's sons according to faith (6) — are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles (7). Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ Our Peace reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself (8).

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "There is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 8, 4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (9), nor did the Jews, in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading (10). Nevertheless God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues — such is the witness of the Apostle (11). In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3, 9) (12).

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this Sacred Synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (13); still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new People of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the Word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4, 8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and the man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproveth, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, colour, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this Sacred Synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2, 12), and, if possible to live for their part in peace with all men (14), so that they many truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (15).

The entire text and all the individual elements which have been set forth in this Declaration have pleased the Fathers. And by the Apostolic power conferred on us by Christ, we, together with the Venerable Fathers, in the Holy Spirit, approve, decree and enact them; and we order that what has been thus enacted in Council be promulgated, to the glory of God.

Rome, at St. Peter's, 28 October, 1965.

I, PAUL, Bishop of the Catholic Church

There follow the signatures of the Fathers.

### **Footnotes**

(1) Cf. Acts 17, 26

(2) Cf. Wis. 8, 1; Acts 14, 17; Rom. 2, 6-7; 1 Tim 2, 4.

(3) Cf. Apoc. 21, 23f.

(4) Cf 2 Cor. 5, 18-19.

(5) Cf St. Gregory VII, Letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania (PL 148, col 450 f.)

(6) Cf. Gal. 3, 7.

(7) Cf. Rom. 11, 17-24.

(8) Cf. Eph. 2, 14-16.

(9) Cf. Luke 19, 44.

(10) Cf. Rom. 11, 28.

(11) Cf. Rom 11, 28-29; cf Dogmatic Constitution, Lumen Gentium (Light of Nations), AAS, 55 (1965), p. 20.

(12) Cf Is. 66, 23; Ps 65, 4; Rom. 11, 11-32.

(13) Cf. John 19, 6.

(14) Cf. Rom. 12, 18.

(15) Cf. Matt. 5, 45.