

Interreligious dialogue and the colonial legacy: A critical assessment of current models for interreligious dialogue as tools toward reconciliation in the South African context.

By

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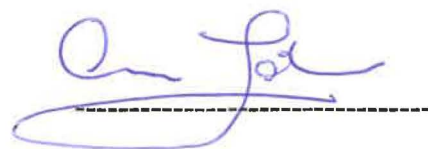
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Arthur Anthony Johnson

I, Arthur Anthony Johnson, hereby declare that *“Interreligious dialogue and the Colonial legacy: A critical assessment of current models for interreligious dialogue as tools toward reconciliation in the South African context”*, is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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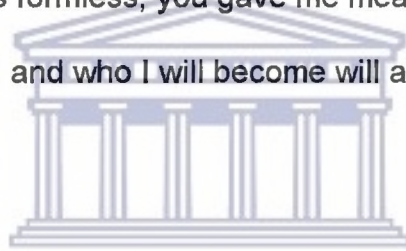
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Arthur Anthony Johnson

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Arthur Anthony Johnson

ACRONYMS

BBC, British Broadcasting Corporation

DRC, Dutch Reformed Church

RDP, Reconstruction and Development Programme

TRC, Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UCCSA, United Congregational Church of South Africa

WCC, World Council of Churches



CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Acronyms	v
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement and identification of the problem.....	2
Analysis of the hypothesis.....	2
1. PLURALISM AND THE INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE	6
1.1 The why of pluralism and the purpose it must serve.....	6
1.2 The reasons for the existence of interreligious dialogue.	10
1.3 The importance of interreligious dialogue.....	12
2. COLONIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY	16
2.1 The Colonial Legacy.....	17
2.2 Christianity and Colonialism: Its impact on indigenous communities, cultures and religions.....	19
2.2.1 The impact of missionary endeavours on Africa.....	21
2.3 Current picture of the post-colonial background to Africans daily life.....	27
3. MODELS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE	30
3.1 Conservative Evangelical Model.....	32

Chapter	Page
3.1.1 Insights.....	33
3.1.2 Inadequacies.....	34
3.2 Mainline Protestant Model.....	34
3.2.1 Insights.....	36
3.2.1 Inadequacies.....	37
3.3 Catholic Model.....	37
3.3.1 Insights.....	40
3.3.2 Inadequacies.....	40
3.4 Theocentric Model.....	41
3.4.1 Insights	45
3.4.2 Inadequacies	46
4. THE NATURE OF DIALOGUE.....	48
4.1 Reconciliation within the South African context.....	52
4.1.1 Repentance.....	53
4.1.2 Forgiveness.....	53
4.2 Religion and society in providing the platform for reconciliation...	57
4.3 The role of discipleship towards giving expression to reconciliation.....	60
4.4 The World Council of Churches and the nature of dialogue.....	62
4.4.1 The Consultation in Chiang Mai 1979.....	62
4.6 The nature of the guidelines for dialogue.....	69



Chapter	Page
CONCLUSION	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75
BOOKS REVIEWS OF “NO OTHER NAME”	83
SUMMARY	84
OPSOMMING	87
KEYWORDS	90



INTRODUCTION

My first encounter with the challenge of interreligious dialogue, at university level, left me breathless. I could not understand the fact that during interreligious encounters, we virtually did not reflect on alleviating the ills of the colonial conquest. My further engagement with issues pertaining to the topic in question has continued to prompt me to raise critical questions, particularly concerning the place and nature of dialogue, given the colonial conquest. The avoidance not only threatened Christian mission and witness in the world, but also compromised God's image and the vitality of Christianity for the future and in the lives of its followers.

The impact of the "conquest of the backward" (Africa, Latin America and Asia) by the "Western World" and the expansion of Christianity and its wake, had grave implications for primal/traditional religiosity. This being the case, I will explore whether and how interreligious dialogue tries to deal with this problem as well as whether the colonial legacy is addressed in relation to the decimation of indigenous religion in Africa. I am, however, not focusing on a particular traditional religion, but on the phenomenon of traditional belief and religiosity.

Statement and identification of the problem

Pluralism in our daily life demands of religious people that they redefine their co-existence with people of other faiths. Today, a more positive regard for the other has developed. Guidelines have been introduced to facilitate dialogue between various religions. However, these guidelines for interreligious dialogue still do not seem to adequately address the critical question of the colonial legacy of Christian expansion.

The aim of this research is to find an appropriate model that will be adequate for the demands of reconciliation in the South African context.



Analysis of the hypothesis

The impact of the colonial legacy on indigenous religion, tradition and culture, has not somehow been properly or adequately resolved. The impact of Western culture and imperialist ways of life on traditional religiosity seems to have led to a broken relationship between Christianity and traditional religion. This is a tension which can be properly resolved through communication, by means of an act of confession and repentance.

Confession and repentance do not seem to be priorities in interreligious dialogue. If Christians want to be obedient to God and His demands of

discipleship, they must restore their our relationship with humanity and ask forgiveness for sins committed in religion's name. This is a process which can take place, meaningfully, through the vehicle provided by interreligious dialogue.

As an extension of, or the indirect consequence of, colonialism, apartheid in the South African context also forces Christians to their knees. Apartheid, through its devastating institutions, alienated people from one another and dismantled the spirit of community. By using dialogue as a tool to recreate community and through the act of repentance, alienated Christians can be reconciled and God can be glorified.

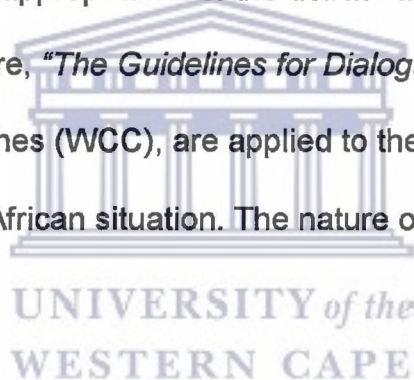
This act of repentance will provide the agenda for dialogue, indeed it will serve to provide an agenda for interreligious dialogue, but will also serve to promote intra-Christian dialogue. In this way a specific kind of dialogue will be suggested that will necessitate repentance and might lead to reconciliation.

Hence, in chapter one, the main focus will be on the phenomenon of religious pluralism, why it exists and the purpose it serves. From there on the focus will be on the reason for interreligious dialogue and its importance for the future.

In the second chapter, there will be a brief overview of the colonial legacy in Africa, Christianity's apparent allegiance to and legitimation of this legacy, which necessitates the need for repentance.

In chapter three there will be an assessment of certain models of interreligious dialogue, as outlined by Paul Knitter. The insights and inadequacies of the different models will be focused on and assessed according to what extent each responds to the need for repentance.

Chapter four deals with the appropriation of the debate and the author's choice is stated. Furthermore, "*The Guidelines for Dialogue*", as proposed by the World Council of Churches (WCC), are applied to the demands of reconciliation in the South African situation. The nature of dialogue will receive particular attention.

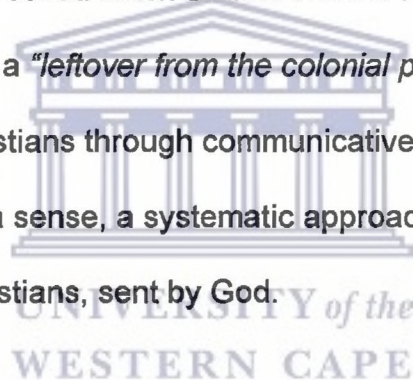


The final chapter will consist of the conclusion and tentative proposals regarding the nature of dialogue. This chapter will also reflect on what the demands for reconciliation are in South Africa. It will be argued that the nature of dialogue, which has repentance and renewal as its goals, will also promote intra-Christian dialogue.

Thus the pattern this thesis follows is to start with religious pluralism, historical explanations and the colonial conquest as providing the background to the South African context. Hence, apartheid is viewed as an

indirect consequence of the colonial legacy (white-dominated foreign rule over the indigenous). Running concurrently in the thesis, is the switch from an interreligious dialogue to intra-Christian dialogue, in order to unite and reconcile Christians towards union with God.

The thesis presupposes that there is a missiological crisis in the South African context due to the past cohabitation of mission and colonialism. By oppressing certain groups, yet proclaiming devotion to Christian values, past South African governments have harmed the image of Christianity in the eyes of their victims. Hence, oppressed black South Africans have a negative attitude towards mission as a *“leftover from the colonial past”*. This image should be reversed by Christians through communicative action and through dialogue. This thesis is, in a sense, a systematic approach to reinterpreting the vitality of relational Christians, sent by God.



CHAPTER 1

Pluralism and the interreligious dialogue

This chapter will start the debate by concentrating on the phenomenon or occurrence of religious pluralism. Thereafter, the reasons for its existence and its importance in providing a system of coexistence in mutuality will be examined. The contours of interreligious interaction will be outlined as briefly as possible, by assessing the processes of interreligious dialogue and the role this dialogue must play, from a Christian perspective. An attempt will be made to show how Christianity's view of the other shifted from viewing the other as posing a threat, to regarding the other as affording an opportunity to understand personal and individual reality within a context of diversity. A further attempt is made to show how by mutual effort evil and injustice can be eradicated through dialogue, within the interreligious context.

1.1 The why of pluralism and the purpose it must serve.

Increasingly, religious pluralism is becoming an inescapable fact of our daily life (Grant, 1989). Christians are called to practise their faith in a world that is marked by religious diversity. This has been brought about by a number of factors.

Since the earliest times, religious people have been aware that, elsewhere in the world, other people had beliefs and engaged in religious practices that were quite different from those of their own communities (Lochhead, 1988: 5). Therefore, people showed sensitivity to and acknowledging the fact of the plurality of life.

The collapse of the West in military, political, moral and religious areas caused a “paradigm shift”. A paradigm is a model, or cluster of assumptions, on the basis of which phenomena are perceived and explained (Swidler, 1990: 57). Other, non-Western powers became more prominent and appeared to represent other ways of life and other religions. Western religion became just one among the other religions of the world (Hick, 1985: 40).

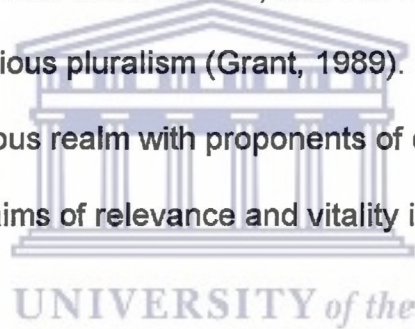
The development of communications technology enabled people to make contact across local and international boundaries. The “*technological revolution*” (Thomas, 1987: 1), which caused a technological shrinking of the world, was one of the main factors. The world was turned into a “*global village*”, a mixing of different peoples, ideologies and religions. Hence, in a world of different languages and cultures, it is not surprising that there are also different religions.

Recent developments that have further contributed to the rise of the consciousness of religious diversity have been the growth in mass education,

communications and travel, a world economy and threatening global destruction.

This shift in paradigm suggests that the cultural and racial domination of the West, or Europeans for that matter, has become a myth. The principle of divide and rule has come and gone and the human status of one race, or another, is no longer determined by the Western imperialists.

This has brought about the realization that people of other traditions make a directly parallel claim to ultimate endorsement, and this realization has led to the inescapable fact of religious pluralism (Grant, 1989). We cannot deny the fact that we share the religious realm with proponents of other religious heritages, with their own claims of relevance and vitality in sustaining life.



Many responses to this fact have come to the fore. Kamali (as quoted in Pobee, 1992: 12) says that "*historically... pluralism or a plurality of religion could be a prelude either to conflict and strife, or compromise and adaptation*". Clearly, the fact of religious pluralism offers a prospect of celebrating diversity, but it also threatens the relevance and vitality in mission and witness of Christians.

Langdon Gilkey (Gilkey, 1976) has argued that pluralism puts Christians on a journey that shows them that a "rough parity" to plurality exists between the religions. In other words, all religions make reference to a common religious

experience. Gilkey argues and says that the reasons for this rough parity are both theological and cultural. Gilkey suggests that, theologically, parity arises out of a recognition of the relativity of religion and its doctrines, plus the reemphasis on the breadth of divine love, plus the inwardness of faith and love. Furthermore it leads to the acknowledgement, that divine self-revelation has taken place elsewhere and that God's grace is there. This acknowledgement signified a shift in Western culture, from a position of superiority to one of rough parity (Hick, 1985: 39).

Kamali agrees and suggests that, in a context of plurality, "many things placed together in a given situation need not try to displace each other..." (Pobee, 1992: 12). Plurality can rather serve the purpose of explaining or giving definition to one's place in the universe. Thus it can be said that religious plurality can serve as a vehicle of explanation and understanding of mutual coexistence and mutual createdness.

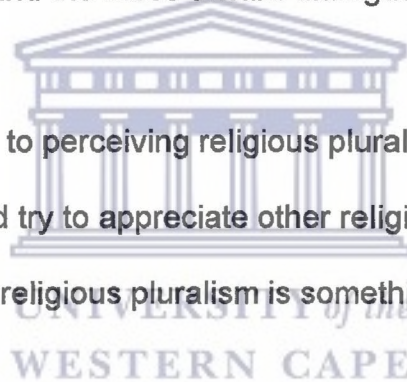
According to John Hick (1985: vii), people are not only experiencing the reality of religious pluralism, but also the vitality of other religions as well as their influence in the modern world, their depths, beauty and attractiveness. Hick adds that religious pluralism should be seen as religious experiences that are, amongst others, culturally conditioned perceptions by humans of the Ultimate Reality, God. Thus, religious experiences give expression to the human element of religion, which suggests that religion is a human response

and thus subject to fallibility. The suggestion of fallibility in turn questions the claim of superiority by any one religion.

Thus, the “rough parity” mentioned by Langdon Gilkey suggests that in some sense the sole efficacy or even superiority of Christianity is a claim that can no longer be made, or can be made with only great discomfort (Hick, 1985: 31).

Since Christianity has been at the heart of Western civilization, it could not escape this paradigm-shift and the move toward dialogue.

Therefore, as an alternative to perceiving religious pluralism as a threat, Christian theologians should try to appreciate other religious traditions in their own right and see that religious pluralism is something to be accepted and celebrated.



1.2 The reasons for the existence of interreligious dialogue

Without a doubt, one needs to affirm that the age of disputation is over. Thomas (1987: 1) calls this new type of mutual relatedness in plurality a “*dialogical existence*”. Paul Knitter (1995: 25) says that Christians have the task with others to keep ourselves from turning “*truth*” into a tool of oppression. Therefore, followers of different faith traditions must and should engage in interreligious dialogue.

Hick refers to the need for interreligious dialogue by using Tom Driver and Suchoki, among others, as conversation partners. Tom Driver, he says, exclaims that *"No, pluralism is not an ultimate concern it is an immediate concern..."* (Hick, 1985: 207). Hick says that, at stake is Christianity's self-understanding of its own place in history, and its understanding of God. Pluralism is a demand laid upon Christians, brought upon them by their own history, which has largely been one of *"universal colonialism"* (Hick, 1985: 207).

Majorie Hewitt Suchoki views religious pluralism from a feminist perspective. She holds that, from a feminist perspective, the fact of religious pluralism must be affirmed. She argues that the search for justice is held to be the fundamental criterion of value, and action the focus of dialogue, among religions (Hick, 1985: 149). Hence the vitality and validity of action, through dialogue, is held to be the judgment of active participation in the fight for justice.

Thus, the concern for interreligious dialogue is the concern for and of justice.

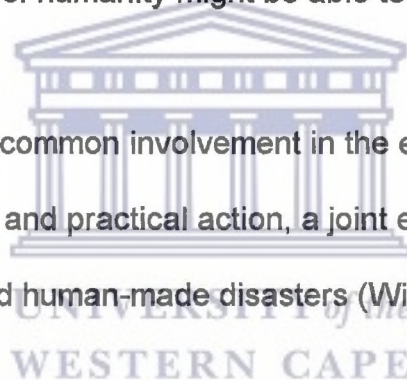
1.3 The importance of interreligious dialogue

Most traditional societies are moving towards the recognition of ideological and religious diversity. Thus, interreligious dialogue must become

“unavoidable, inevitable, not planned and a way of life” (Ariarajah, 1986), in order for Christianity to regain its depth and vitality within a pluralist society.

According to Wingate (1988: 2), what Christians are required to do is to contribute towards the unity of humanity, and to build harmony and tranquillity in this world. Dick Mulder (1977: 15), says that the threat of lethal forces has become immense. Nuclear armaments, poverty and hunger, and the pollution of the environment call into questioned the survival of humanity. These shadows are hovering over all world cultures and world religions, and a common effort by the whole of humanity might be able to forestall disaster.

This prevention will mean a common involvement in the eradication of poverty and, through prayer and practical action, a joint effort against the consequences of natural and human-made disasters (Wingate, 1988: 2).



What is essential for this required dialogue is a type of theology that is concerned with the human need in the context of religious plurality. This suggests an incarnational approach by the Christian dialogue partner. Christians need to be incarnated into the cultures and experiences of the other and into how the other conceptualizes his or her world and needs.

It is important to realize that God's sovereignty does not depend on humans. God's existence in faith does not depend on the extent to which the other reflects a Christian conception of God's nature. In other words, God is greater

than religion and religious *"trappings"*. Therefore, the goal in interreligious encounter is to discover the identity of insights underlying diversity of expression.

Wiles (1992: 4) says that *"interreligious dialogue"* is not just the term for a more civilized, socially acceptable way of achieving the same ends that were previously attained by one-sided preaching to the unconverted. Interreligious dialogue involves a genuinely reciprocal process, in which two parties stand on an equal footing of readiness to receive as well as to give, and necessarily involves seeing the other religion in some sense as a revelation of God from which each needs to learn.



Interreligious dialogue that does not eventually lead to action towards forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation will become hypocritical and hence ineffective. Interreligious dialogue seeks an action that promotes an open and universal rather than exclusive stance toward other faiths.

The challenge of religious pluralism is of such a nature that first-hand experience of the living reality of other religions transforms the Christian's preconceptions of inferior status and puts the relationship between the Christian and other traditions in a new light. Christians can no longer assume that their position is superior and a standard for evaluating other traditions.

What has become obvious now is that Christians must appreciate other traditions in their own right. Christians must endeavour to maintain an approach which recognizes the limitations of their own particular tradition and views other traditions as equally limited, but also equally valid; in a short unified perspective.

The Christian participant needs to rid himself/herself from feelings of cultural and/or historical superiority. There must be a correlation between the concern for pluralism and the concern for justice. Pluralism is an issue of justice.

Christian history reveals that most of the dialogue between Christianity and traditional religions has been determined by economic power. Christianity with its greater economic strength seemed to dictate to economically poor and historically traditional religions. These religions were thus judged as inferior in dialogue. This situation should be rectified through a revised process of interreligious dialogue.

According to Hick (1985: 150), what is called for is a non-judgmental dialogue with other religions in light of the relativism of belief systems, a shift from ideological ground to ethical ground, along with an open recognition of the conditioned nature of the norm of justice that we bear. Thus, pluralists must learn to speak of a commitment to the other. Hick says that there also needs to be a commitment to critical exploration of the norm in the very dialogue wherein it is brought to bear.

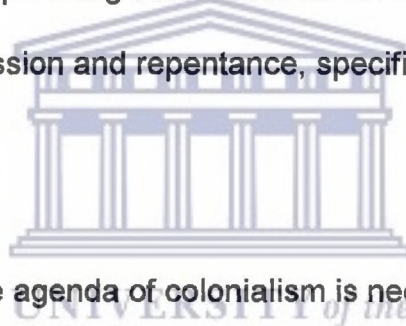
It is thus abundantly clear that dialogue within the interreligious context can lead to cooperation within diversity and that Christians and non-Christians need to give verbal and concrete expression to their commitment to each other, to the betterment of religious coexistence in society. There are definite reasons for these problems of pluralism in South Africa, i.e. colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, exploitation of the weak, warfare, apartheid, etc. It is these issues that make the topic particularly pertinent in Africa and other parts of the Third World (Hick, 1985: 217). It is to these issues that the discussion now turns.



CHAPTER 2

Colonialism and Christianity

Within this chapter giving a brief synopsis is given of the dynamics of Christian engagement with other traditional religions on the African continent during the colonial era. This synopsis will serve as a further development of the argument, showing how pressing the need is for an interreligious dialogue that takes the form of confession and repentance, specifically in a South African context.



A clear understanding of the agenda of colonialism is needed in order to appreciate how the other, foreign to the eye of the colonist, was perceived. In this chapter this agenda and its impact on religiosity in Africa will be discussed. There will also be a discussion of the nature of the relationship between Christianity and colonialism and how they both formulated their conception about primal religions. This discussion will illustrate how mission was perverted and the image of witness scarred.

Thus, restoration through accountability is needed in order to be confessing Christian, giving expression to God's mission in the world. This mission is the

seeking of community, through reconciled human beings, committed to justice and the hope of salvation, in God.

2.1 The Colonial Legacy

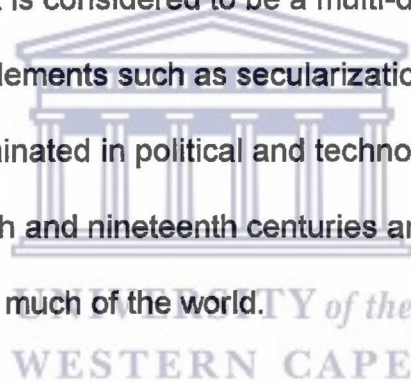
For the colonists, Africa's colonizing required seizing the hearts and minds of its "*wild*" inhabitants, rousing them from their natural state by cultivating their self-consciousness. This took place through a process which suggested doing away with the known and taking on and accepting the totally different.

The colonial encounter was a meeting of two worlds, one imperial and expansive, the other local and defensive. The European relationship to Africa was of the nature of complementary opposition and inequality, in which the former stood to the latter as civilization to nature, saviour to victim, actor to subject, the wild would be cultivated and the suffering saved (Comaroff, and Comaroff, 1991: 88).

Africa became an indispensable term, a negative trope in the language of modernity, it provided a rhetorical ground on which a new heroic history could be acted out (Godzich, 1988). In other words, the colonist could act as hero and save Africa from its primitive mind-set and make it "*modern*". The West saw Africa as being backward and primal and thus it had to be developed in order to be on a par with the rest of Western civilization.

Africa's inhabitants were in a sense regarded as creatures in need of development. This is clearly observable in the words of Hume when he says that *"there scarcely even was a civilized nation of (Negro) complexion"* (Hume, 1960). Rousseau echoed the same words once and said that blacks were mentally inferior by nature. Within the European conception of Africans, these thought patterns were common. Africa and its people longed for development. Thus, the need for the modernization of the African traditional believer.

Modernization is a complex process which has caused tribal African countries a lot of pain and suffering. It is considered to be a multi-dimensional historical process, characterized by elements such as secularization, urbanization, industrialization, which culminated in political and technological revolutions in Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and which, through colonial expansion, through much of the world.



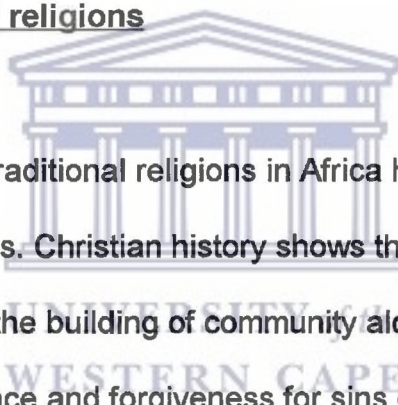
Consequently, countries with rural and traditional societies were transformed into increasingly urban, industrial and capitalist countries. Some forms of social and economic life remained but only insofar as they served the new order.

Modernization was seen to be part of the Western world's attempt to construct a master narrative of ideological control for the rest of humanity (Comaroff, and Comaroff, 1993). The colonized were reduced to submissive recipients of what the West had to offer and they were obliged to receive it. In

other words, the colonized had no choice but to accept what was forced on them by the imperialists.

Therefore, Africans had to abandon what they knew, including their identity, in order to be modern. In other words, for the sake of being modern, they could no longer be African, but had to become foreigners in their own environments, in their own countries.

2.2 Christianity and Colonialism: Their impact on indigenous communities, cultures and religions



Christianity's dealings with traditional religions in Africa have been severely compromised and ambiguous. Christian history shows that dialogue has not always been promoted, nor the building of community along the lines of restoration through repentance and forgiveness for sins committed, as witness to the Christian God. Dialogue was seen as evangelistic witness, which aimed at conversion.

The original converts from these traditions were by and large persuaded to discard their prebaptismal world of religious belief and embrace the missionary Christian one in its entirety, just as with colonialism. The majority of missionaries regarded the Christianity and African Religious views as mutually exclusive and even hostile to each other (Elphick, 1997: 4).

Christians over the centuries have regarded the traditional believer as

primitive and simplistic. Throughout recorded history, prejudice and discrimination have been common social methods of dealing with intergroup differences. Organized religion in the form of Christianity has to a great extent contributed to the perpetuation of intergroup inequality.

During and after 1652, the public expression of Christianity in South Africa was monopolized by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The Reformed piety and doctrine expressed by the white colonists, persuaded them that their eternal salvation, derived from God's promise to their ancestors. Hence, the colonists embraced Christianity as an exclusive and inherited religion, which demarcated group boundaries, kindled their sense of superiority and established the basis of a white-dominated racial order. In contrast, a few whites in the DRC maintained that people's salvation did not depend on their ancestry, but on individual conversion to Jesus Christ (Elphick, 1997: 2).

However, new converts from the indigenous peoples were led to believe that the road to a better life was the one already being travelled by the Western world. Through the process of modernization, the colonialists abused institutionalized religion, in the form of Christianity, to instil their capitalist reforms and Western idealism. This is how indigenous people, in their initial contact with Christianity, interpreted Christianity with all its western cultural, philosophical and linguistic elements.

2.2.1 The impact of missionary endeavours on Africa

There existed a zeal for Christian missions in most churches. During the early nineteenth century, South Africa became one of the most intensely “*occupied*” fields for Christian mission in the world (Elphick, 1997: 3).

A few Christian missionaries valued aspects of African culture. But more general was the condemnation of African customs and institutions and the attempt to replace them with European moral codes and practices which the missionaries regarded as having universal validity. A mixture of Christian and Victorian cultural values was forced on converts (Dexter-Taylor, 1935). This cultural domination signified an essential part of a comprehensive process of social change and political conquest (Thompson, *The Oxford History*, 251).

Evangelization in Africa was understood as “*civilizing*” and that inevitably meant, for example, replacing polygamy with monogamy, “*heathen nakedness*” with European dress, and education in literacy and basic skills. These changes brought about through missionary activity, were considered major milestone by the West, because they served imperial purposes. It was a situation where the African was reoriented and his or her mentality was re-shaped to think in Western terms.

But how did these changes impact on African religiosity? Missionaries often failed to recognise any religion amongst indigenous people, because the

African's life setting, in and of itself, is situated within the religious realm and from that, life is interpreted.

Therefore, it is important to note that, before Christianity was introduced to Africa, there existed a faith that sustained societal life, identity, heritage and cosmic existence. Religion undoubtedly formed an integral part of who the African identity. Thus, religious change was rarely rapid and never simple (Elphick, 1997: 3).

For the sake of transforming the African, Christians called continuously upon the political arm of the Empire to erode the system of chiefs and so make local communities more yielding to their ministrations (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: 8). Culture therefore became a battleground against colonialism and its agents, especially the missionaries (Beinart, and Bundy, 1987).

From the above it can be concluded that the missionaries undermined traditional customs and structures from within, just as colonial and trading efforts undermined them from without (Hutchinson, 1957). Missionary policy and practice, thus, led to serious cultural disorientation and dislocation for the Africans (Hutchinson, 1957). The African's whole world was turned upside down.

To challenge customs even in the name of the gospel, was to threaten the whole fabric of society and undermine the authority of both the chiefs and the ancestors. It was, in fact, to threaten the well-being of the community for which the chiefs and elders held the responsibility both to the living and the “living-dead”. This situation that later led Africa to be degraded and debased (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991), because Africans were alienated from one another.

If governments engaged in political colonisation and entrepreneurs in economic colonization, it was pre-eminently the role of missionaries to colonise through evangelization and education (Comaroff, 1987).

The role of the missionaries also took the form of facilitating the cultural reorientation that accompanied black accommodation to the social reality of white power and subsequently white domination.

By relocating African converts on mission stations, the missionaries separated them from their cultural roots and the social structures which had previously supported and controlled their lives, thus also creating different classes of Africans (De Kock, 1993). African communities were transformed from being self-sufficient, autonomous chiefdoms into interlocking and dependent communities of peasants, working in areas owned by white people.

The missionaries were certainly not innocent of the fact that their evangelization, westernizing and educating efforts, were forcing Africans into the capitalist system and thereby boosting European economic interests and power.

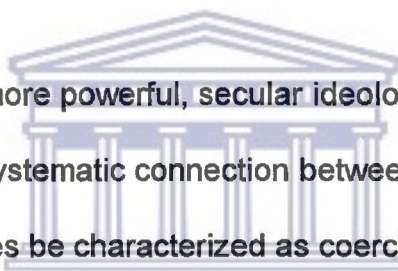
Missionaries perpetuated an educational system which held that Africans were members of an adolescent race in need of missionary guidance and discipline in order to realise their potential. This system provided a pillar for white cultural and racial domination. Institutions which were governed according to these educational principles and systems, were funded by colonial authorities.



Thus, Africans aspiring to reach the standard of social elevation in this colonial society, had little choice but to embrace Western values, which were embedded and promoted by missionary education.

Missionary education prevailed deep into the twentieth century in the South African context. Up to the 1950's, almost all schools for Africans, and up till today, private schools for the white elite, are controlled by churches and missions (Elphick, 1997: 1). Hence, church schools are still providing a platform for the political rule of the day, by propagating its philosophies in schools.

Missionaries were regarded by colonial authorities as a vital arm of their policy and interests (Stewart, 1903). The missionaries were thus condemned by those who were colonized, as agents of imperialism and the colonial authorities. If a person correctly understand the Comaroffs, it becomes apparent that they would agree with such a notion and therefore would argue that, in this colonizing project, the Christian missionary would play a special role as agent, scribe and moral alibi. Therefore, missionaries were seen as those who actively supported the political and cultural conquest of the African people.



Christian ideology and the more powerful, secular ideology of Empire existed concurrently. There was a systematic connection between Religion and Empire, which can sometimes be characterized as coercion by one religion and decimation by another. However this relationship was ambiguous. Missionaries were under continuous compulsion to distrust government and to go their own way. On the other hand, they also looked to their government to provide them with protection against possible native attacks.

It should be stated in no uncertain terms that missionaries are to be held equally responsible for the profound religious, cultural and economic changes forced on the Africans. But if missionaries are seen as mere extensions of European rule, there will be a failure to appreciate their vision and their understanding of their calling. Their calling came from an apostolic zeal to carry out God's mission in the world of salvation for all in Jesus Christ. Thus,

missionaries perceived Africans as those in dire need of evangelization. This zeal was wrongly interpreted by many missionaries and also by converts or historically traditional believers, thus distorting Christian mission and witness in Africa.

During the colonial period, when the minority Church was a "*psychological majority*" through its participation in the religion of the powerful colonizers, its "*foreignness*" was a privilege on the part of its power and it made no apology for its otherness (Ariarajah, 1986: 21).

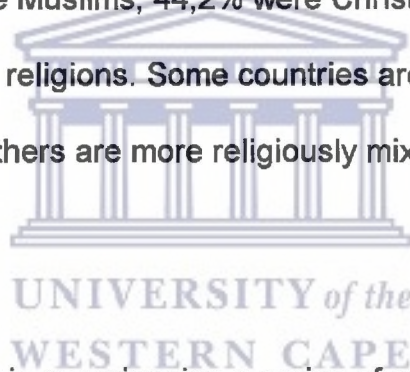
After the colonial period the Church did recognize its minority status. The need for identity and the instinct towards self-preservation, however, reinforced its isolation and alienation from the dominant cultural group. The Church became so caught up in its ideals, characterized by self-interest, that it was totally alienated from the religious ethos of traditional or indigenous peoples (Ariarajah, 1986: 21).

The question that springs to mind is "*How do Christians restore this dreadful picture that still finds a place in their history-in-the-making?*". Are Christians guilty of forgetting what they did and still are doing? Do they recognize that they have created a monster, that up till today, is still very much alive and still causes suffering?

Against this background it is proposed to assess how well the nature of dialogue deals with the current traditional African religious realm, as a partner in the interreligious dialogue, a dialogue in action, for action.

2.3 Current picture of the post-colonial background to African's daily situation

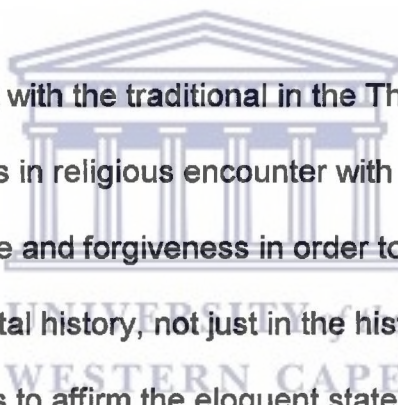
In Africa today there are three major religious traditions: the indigenous religion, Islam and Christianity. An estimation in 1980 showed that 41,2% of the population in Africa were Muslims, 44,2% were Christians, and 13,9% were members of traditional religions. Some countries are almost entirely Islamic or Christian, while others are more religiously mixed (Wijsen, 1994:123).



The whole African continent is experiencing a series of crises such as economies that are near to collapse, internal conflicts, civil wars, human rights abuses, serious ecological problems due to extensive deforestation and unpredictable weather patterns. The suffering caused by Africa's indebtedness to the rich North has reached intolerable proportions, and the struggle against hunger, ignorance and disease continues unabated, with no end in sight.

No matter how bleak the situation may seem, it has been relieved by some positive elements. In general, human solidarity and unity, hospitality and tolerance are great values in Africa.

Reconciliation is what Africa and the whole world is yearning for. Human divisions and conflicts are very real, but solutions must be sought on the basis of a common creation. This should be seen by Christians as an opportunity to take lead in human deliverance, through dialogue and acting as the interlocutor.



Thus, Christian engagement with the traditional in the Third World must seek to reverse the transgressions in religious encounter with the traditional religions, through repentance and forgiveness in order to affirm God's involvement in humanity's total history, not just in the history of Christians. This engagement also needs to affirm the eloquent statement, "*Africa's witness is sufficient for Africa's salvation*".

What is needed or required from Christians is an appreciation and understanding of the force and vitality of traditional religion and its impact on African Christian believers. Christians should play a role in the commemoration of African heritage and history, in order to appreciate and celebrate their African origin and future in Jesus Christ.

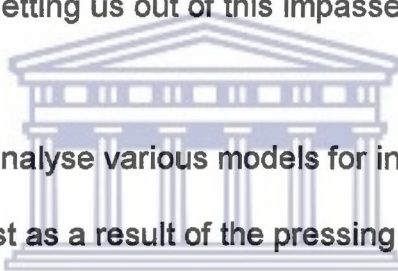
The focus will now shift to the way Christians have tried to deal with the need to restore Christianity's image, to cope with its call to witness and to derail the monster it has created. A look at various Christian responses, as outlined by Paul Knitter, now follows.



CHAPTER 3

Models for Interreligious Dialogue

The previous two chapters have clearly described the problem of pluralism in South Africa, especially religious pluralism, and the historical reasons for its existence. The next step is to see whether current models for interreligious dialogue are of any help in getting us out of this impasse.



Therefore, this chapter will analyse various models for interreligious dialogue from those that currently exist as a result of the pressing international concern with this topic. More particularly, the focus will be on the contribution of the distinguished Catholic theologian and priest, Paul Knitter.

Knitter is world renowned for his identification and categorizing of the models for interreligious dialogue. He has made an extraordinary attempt to deal with the reality of religious pluralism. According to Cracknell (1986: 149), Knitter now stands as an invaluable guide to the theology of religions, as one who challenges Christians to renew their christological efforts.

Knitter's models will be used, as described in his book *"No other Name?"* (1985), to develop the argument further by giving an insight into how

Christians have responded to religious pluralism. Kamali (Pobee, 1992: 36) rightly noted that the history of Christianity does offer examples of intolerance, ignorance and unjustified religious pride which even today causes shame of dialogue in a situation of religious pluralism. Within this context it is once again clear that confession for these sins is crucial and that Christians need to give expression to reconciliation in their dealings with the other. The models pertaining to inter-religious dialogue will be briefly outlined and some insights and inadequacies of the different views will be addressed.

According to Kritzinger (1986:110), the purpose of Knitters book is to provide the theological justification for Christian participation and involvement in the enterprise of religious pluralism. Through this critical survey, Knitter proposes to show how Christians can attain an attitude where they can *"be fully committed to Jesus and fully open to other ways"* (Knitter 1985: xiv).

In Part I of his book, Knitter sketches the popular attitudes towards religious pluralism that are common in Western culture, a culture which also provides the backdrop against which a theology of religions must be formulated. He reviews and enters into dialogue with the views of Troeltsch (*'all are relative'*), Toynbee (*'all are essentially the same'*) and Jung (*'all have a common psychic origin'*).

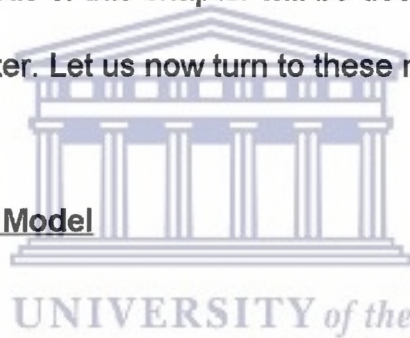
In Part II, Knitter outlines four basic 'models' of Christian responses to the reality of religious pluralism, which are: a) the conservative evangelical

model; b) the mainline Protestant model; c) the Catholic model, and d) the theocentric model. Knitter also discusses the insights and inadequacies of these particular models and by doing so, he enters into a searching dialogue with the Christian tradition (Kritzinger 1986:110).

In Part III, Knitter shows that a non-normative theocentric approach enables Christians to enter into a more authentic dialogue with people of other faiths. This approach suggests a Christology in which God, not Christ, is the norm.

As stated previously, the focus of this chapter will be devoted to the four models as reviewed by Knitter. Let us now turn to these models.

3.1 Conservative Evangelical Model



This model represents the historically dominant Christian view of other religious individuals (Knitter, 1995: 26. This model suggests that there is one true religion, namely Christianity, which is God's answer to human sinfulness and suffering.

Essentially, this model is based on three fundamental beliefs: (1) the Bible is the only and absolute source of knowledge about God, (2) only Jesus is the universal Lord, and that a personal experience with him is necessary for salvation, and (3) the necessity for mission to all people so that all can come to share in the salvific power of Jesus Christ (Knitter, 1985:77). Adherents of other religions should be called to turn from their "*wicked ways*" to the Christian God.

Conservative Evangelicals express the attitude to interreligious dialogue that a knowledge of other religions is indispensable for the mission of Christians. Mission, for conservative Evangelicals, refers to witnessing to non-Christians in order for them to experience the only saviour, Jesus Christ.

Dialogue is perceived as elenctics, which means *'to convince or call to repentance'* (Knitter, 1985: 80). Proponents of this model reject the view that other religious teachings can be means to believing in Jesus Christ. Evangelicals maintain that an understanding and evaluation of Christianity can be done only in terms of the Bible. Therefore, one must have personal contact with Him. Other religions do not accept salvation by faith alone and practise idolatry, because they capture God for themselves in their doctrines. This model suggests that the purpose of dialogue should be that of proclamation and conversion. As John Stott sums it up, *"One of the central purposes of dialogue is, 'to show the absurdity of heathendom'* (Knitter, 1985: 85).

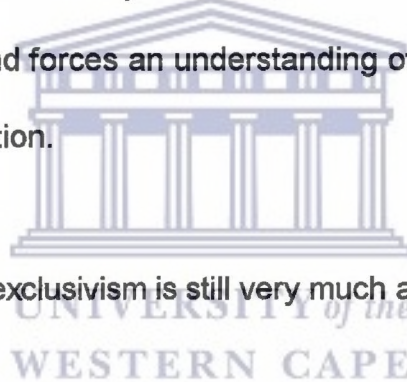
3.1.1 Insights

Knitter argues that this model has many strengths, and raises insights that remain important. It reminds us, for instance, that there is a radical distinction between humans and God, thus indicating the fallibility of humans and the sovereignty of God. Secondly, it clearly defines Jesus' contribution in relieving humans from their suffering and it also creates a clear sense of Christian identity (Knitter, 1985: 92).

3.1.2 Inadequacies

This model does have some serious inadequacies, such as its insistence on the absoluteness of the Bible as the Word of God which blinds Christians to the positive contributions of other religions. This dismissive view of other religions leaves a taste of superiority and arrogance. The conservative evangelicals also argue that authentic revelation of God and salvation can be found in Jesus only.

This model suggests that God is not revealed outside Christianity, a notion with which one cannot agree, because it is an obstacle to dialogue. The model's notion, "*to be saved by faith alone*", seems to reject the notion of the universal grace of God. The model propagates and forces an understanding of the world's religions according to the Christian tradition.



According to Knitter (1995: 26), exclusivism is still very much alive and active within worldwide Christianity.

3.2 Mainline Protestant Model

Unlike the Conservative Evangelical Model, this model has a more positive attitude toward other religions, on the basis of revelation.

A number of Protestant theologians, also mentioned by Knitter, of whom Emil Brunner and Paul Althaus are the most influential, claim that God is revealed in forms other than Jesus. The type of revelation these theologians claim is not natural

revelation, but general revelation, as if humans are responsible for it. It is God, through the Holy Spirit, who is responsible for this general revelation. The theologians claim that general revelation is characterized, amongst other phenomena, by the responsibility that Christians feel for others, their conscience and the beauty of creation. These bear witness to a divine nature given through human experience. This divine nature is the force behind all religions.

Althaus supports these claims, on the theological basis that, if Jesus brings a full revelation, it cannot just drop from above on barren terrain. Other religions become the "*Anknüpfungspunkte*" (points of contact); Jesus then is the special revelation which connects with the general revelations in other religions.

General revelation reveals the existence of an ultimate being and the human condition in need of redemption. But the key point remains that there is general revelation in other religions. The non-Christian religions perceive the existence of the Divine Mystery, but only in a fragmentary way.

It might be interpreted that these religions still need fulfilment. Where else can they find it, but in Christianity. Therefore, they are insufficient in revelation and will find true salvation only in Christianity. This means that salvation, a true experience of the True God, is at best only partial and inadequate in these religions. They need to repent and find true salvation in Christ.

Like the Conservative Evangelical Model, the Mainline Protestant model suggests

a Christocentric (Christ-centred) model of salvation. Christ is perceived as the door to salvation. Hence, Protestants claim that God, through Christ, has intervened only in the Christian tradition, to bring divine justice and love.

In order to fully understand what this Christocentric understanding of salvation entails, a distinction has to be made between the two ways in which adherents of the Mainline Protestant Model insist on the necessity of Christ for salvation. One is ontological and the other is epistemological. In the ontological sense, God through Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection initiates divine love in the world, after the fall of humanity. Christ is the being of God (Structure) and thus expresses the structure of reality. In the epistemological sense, the only way to salvation is contact with Christ via the Gospel. The knowledge of this divine act of God would be found only through interaction with the Christian Bible (Scripture). Outside Christ and Christianity there is no way of finding out, or knowledge of, how the structure of salvation works. Without Christ, humans cannot grasp the depth of human sinfulness and the seriousness of God's holiness and warmth and the need for restoration.

3.2.1 Insights

Knitter (Knitter, 1985: 114) argues that an important insight of this model is the acknowledgement of *"some recognition of universal revelation which is the keystone for any Christian approach to other religions"*. This model provides an interlocutor, a basis of connection, which is very positive for interreligious dialogue. There is a common ground for dialogue recognizing the existence of revelation in all religions

which indicates some form of positive regard for the other.

3.2.1 Inadequacies

Within this model the Christ event becomes, as in the New Testament view, the constitutive cause of whatever salvation is available. This event is also an offer of God's truth and saving grace which has been brought about by the historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is representative of God's love (Knitter, 1995: 29).

The question that is posed is: *What kind of God offers revelation in other religions and not salvation?* Dialogue is seen as a type of "evangelizing dialogue", a proclamation and confession endeavour, because other religions may find their final fulfilment in the identity of Christ. Heavy emphasis is thus laid on the fact that conversion is crucial, in order for people from other religious traditions to be saved. This is yet another claim of superiority, which is detrimental to interreligious dialogue and thus an inadequacy of this model.

3.3 Catholic Model

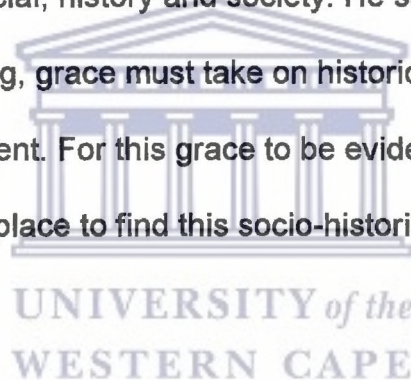
This model can be characterized by the phrase: "*many ways, one norm*".

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1963 - 1965), stands as a watershed in Catholic tradition, in that it affirms the universality of grace and salvation, yet does not explicitly state that the other faiths are ways of salvation too.

According to Knitter, was Karl Rahner the most significant contributor, to this more positive Catholic approach towards other religions. Rahner's starting point is that God's grace is offered to all. In other words, God has a "*universal salvific will*", in the sense that he wants salvation for all humans. Rahner suggests that Christians should think positively about salvation outside Christianity. He concludes that, grace is part of humanity and not something that people put on or take off.

Response to this grace leads to true knowledge of God.

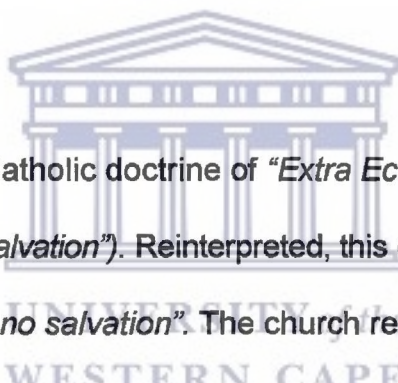
The second point of Rahner's theory pertains to the "*sociological link*" between spirit and flesh, rational and social, history and society. He says that, for God's universal grace to have meaning, grace must take on historical and social form, namely become body, word, event. For this grace to be evident, it has to find concretization and what better place to find this socio-historical mediation than in the religions of the world.



Rahner concludes, therefore, that other religions are positive means of having a good relationship with God. Many theologians responded to this. Some said that a saving faith exists behind all religious beliefs (Lonergan, 1974). It is thus taken for granted that it is God's will that other religions are vehicles of salvation; Christianity is the special way and other religions the common way to salvation.

In an attempt to be inclusive, Rahner viewed non-Christians as "*anonymous Christians*". He suggests that the former know the One of love and can experience His grace. Hence, Christians should not refer to them as "*pagans*".

Hans Küng finds Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians problematic, because for him, it is a way of smuggling the other religions into the Catholic Church. Küng finds the notion problematic on three levels, namely, empirically, personally and theologically. Empirically, he says he can find no "dynamic" orientation among Buddhists or Hindus toward the Christian church. On a personal level, he says that the idea of anonymous Christians is presumptuous, offensive and a block to dialogue. Küng says that, theologically, the theory forces the Christian church into a universal presence. Küng suggests that, what the Christian church should be, is a "critical catalyst". He develops the idea that, without Christ, the other faiths cannot really understand salvation.



Rahner remains faithful to the Catholic doctrine of "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*" ("outside the church there is no salvation"). Reinterpreted, this could read something like "*without the church there is no salvation*". The church remains necessary for salvation, but it does not contain all of salvation in the world; it is, thus the prototype of salvation.

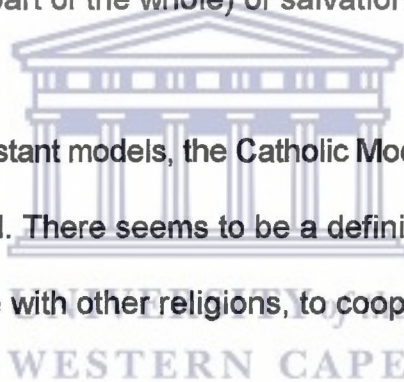
The Catholic Model supports the notion that God desires salvation for all of humanity. Therefore, other religions are vehicles of grace and also vehicles of salvation. Christ, however, is the constitutive cause of salvation, meaning that "*other religions, for all their truth and goodness, are intended to find their final fulfilment and identity in Jesus the Christ*" (Knitter, 1995: 28). Therefore, other religions should show a tendency to move towards the final cause, who is Christ.

3.3.1 Insights

An insight of this model is that it suggests that Christianity should view the other religions as posing a means of salvation.

The theory is positive in that it gives a different perception of mission. The Christian church will not claim herself as the exclusive community through which salvation can be attained. The preaching of the gospel is to make people more aware of what they are, i.e. children of God. Christians should be more concerned with the spiritual welfare of others, than with their own spiritual privileges. The Christian church becomes a sacrament (part of the whole) of salvation.

Unlike the Evangelical and Protestant models, the Catholic Model does not tie down others to an encounter with God. There seems to be a definite concern for Christians to enter into dialogue with other religions, to cooperate with them and to know more about them.



3.3.2 Inadequacies

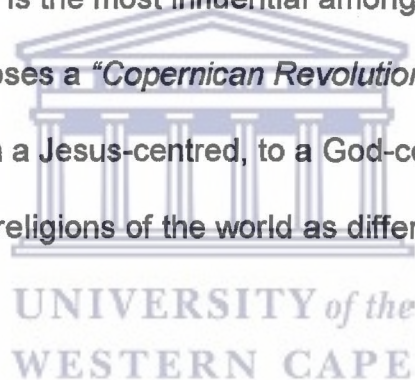
A clear inadequacy of this model is that Christianity claims superiority in dialogue. Although grace is present in other religions, it is still Christ's grace only until they come to embrace it, their grace is incomplete. Christ is the cause of salvation and only those who know him will be saved. This saving act is carried on in the Christian church and anonymous Christians unconsciously have an orientation towards the Christian church.

3.4 Theocentric Model

This model can be characterized by the phrase: *“many ways to the centre”*.

The normativity of Christ and Christianity is questioned in this model. This model tries to establish a dialogue with other religions on the basis of a non-normative Christology. It tries to define the route, from a Christocentric to a Theocentric world-view.

John Hick, according to Knitter, is the most influential among the theologians who espouse this model. Hick proposes a *“Copernican Revolution”* of theology, which suggests a paradigm shift, from a Jesus-centred, to a God-centred model. In this model, one views the different religions of the world as different responses to the One Reality.

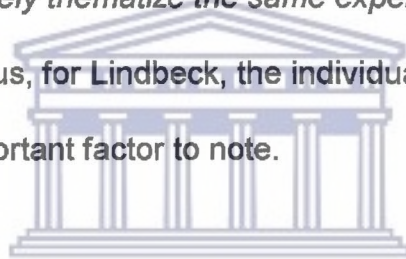


These responses have been shaped by different historical and cultural situations. Factors such as distance, language and fear were responsible for separation, but today these factors no longer play such a big role; on the contrary, today they must develop in agreement.

According to Hick differences are only historical, psychological and cultural. They are insignificant, because there is an ultimate reality behind all. He adds to say that all religions are not necessarily true, but are relative. God is beyond human experience and God is experienced by humans. All religions share a common

ethical ideal, to transform human suffering into liberation.

Hick says that the validity of each religion depends on how much it promotes a common ethical ideal (Soteriological Structure) and the transition from Self-centredness to Reality-centredness. All religions want to serve the purpose of, relieving human beings from pain and suffering. Raimundo Pannikar (Knitter, 1985: 225) agrees with this view and calls it the "*Transcendent Principle*" that exists in all religions. Lindbeck (1973: 183-189), however, is wary of this view and says that there cannot be an inner experience of God common to all human beings, because "*different religions do not diversely thematize the same experiences, rather they have different experiences*". Thus, for Lindbeck, the individuality of religions and religious experiences is an important factor to note.



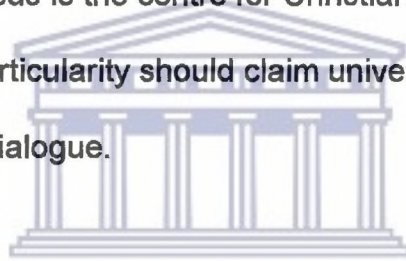
Dialogue amongst religions will help clarify individual interpretations and help in the transformation of human existence.

What about the Christian position, concerning Christ? Hick argues that Christ should remain the unique saviour, without making him normative for others. He claims that the Christian belief in the incarnation and divineness of Christ is mythic and calls for reinterpretation. By following the mythic development of incarnation in the Jewish tradition "*Son of God*", it becomes apparent that any person involved in extraordinary acts can claim the title.

Under Greek philosophical influence, this title was to be used in a divine sense, with

the result that Jesus was raised to a position where he was understood to be the second person in the Holy Trinity. But in today's culture, the title does not necessarily have the same meaning and the concept needs to be treated as mythical.

Pannikar (Knitter, 1985: 126) holds the notion of the "*Universal Christ*" and suggests that Christ is visible or present in every religion. He says that Christians should recognize that Christ will never be fully known on earth, because that amounts to knowing the Father, whom nobody can see. Therefore, God is truly in Jesus but not only in Jesus. Jesus is the centre for Christians, but not for all. All these scholars agree that no particularity should claim universality. This view lays a foundation for interreligious dialogue.



What part do other religions play in God's providence? This question poses a huge problem for twentieth century Christians. The Bible does not quite answer the question, as the Old Testament prophets were acquainted with only the savage religions of their times which, practised child sacrifice on the altar of Moloch, and did not know about the world religions as they are known today.

The New Testament writers did not know either, for the early church knew only the now obsolete, mystery cults of the Roman Empire. The implication is that no biblical statements can claim the original meaning of the texts with regard to Islam, Buddhism, etc. (Hick, 1977:73).

Furthermore, and though this might be less theological, it is viewed as important that in ninety-eight percent (98%) of cases of people adhering to a religion, it is the religions which the person was born. More than likely, the community into which a person is born, determines the person's norms, convictions and insights. The individual believer's natural pride and a desire to view his/her own religion as superior are extensions of this sociological reality.

This sense of superiority has in many ways led to the justification of religious persecution, exclusivism, conquest, etc. *"It is for the adherents of each of the great traditions to look critically at their own dogmas in the light of their new experiences within a religious plural world"* (Hick, 1985: 50). Hick rightly suggests that all religions stand to be judged by the new experiences in religious pluralism.

Hick (1982: 51-52) also claims that expressions of the "Eternal One" take many forms or names. Religious claims do not exist in isolation, but in relation to culture and human history, which are in turn related to certain economic, geographical and climatic circumstances. This relationship does not imply that belief in God is solely a human projection influenced by culture.

Hick says that a definite divineness exists, but it takes concrete form in cultural factors. He explains this by arguing for an Eternal One beyond relationship, with a creation and an Eternal One in relation with humankind. The former is Eternal One as personal, expressed in concepts in relationship to particular communities. For example, Yahweh should be understood in relation to Israel and its history. In

the same way, Krishna is divine in relation to the Shaivite community (Hick, 1982: 51-53).

Although different religions are regarded as totalities they are also complex and ever changing. For instance, to take Christianity's total history, it is full of contradictions. It flourishes, renews and reforms as well as damages and, in certain circumstances, represses, or used to. Due to the complexities of Christianity, it is difficult to make universal moral judgements about it. Can one religion be constitutive for all the others?

This will mean the superiority of that one religion, which is not conducive to interreligious dialogue. It might be more acceptable that no one religion is above the others. It must be recognized that all are different responses to the Eternal One. It must be understood though, that religion must be defined as that which strives to overcome human suffering and to foster full humanity.

3.4.1 Insights

What is insightful of this model is that it opts for a theocentric Christology which, according to Knitter (1985: xii), is consistent with the witness of scripture and with much of mainline Christian theology. Knitter also says that the Theocentric Model allows Christians to be fully committed to Jesus and fully open to other ways. This model, Knitter (1994:24) argues, also proposes a theology which is comparative, suggesting that the Christian's theological task of interpreting and understanding

his/her own religious tradition should be done in conversation with others.

Knitter suggests that dialogue must be based on an openness to the possibility of genuine change and conversion. The dialogue will also produce both unity and an evermore splendid diversity.

3.4.2 Inadequacies

This model, however is relatively new and, for many Christians, threatening to what they feel is the foundation of their faith, i.e. the centrality of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, Knitter (1995: 37) summarizes and says that the models of Christian attitudes toward others have been cumulative not disjunctive. Knitter argues that *“they do not simply reject but rather clarifies and preserves what went before”*. He says that a Christ-centred theology stresses and continues to stress the necessity of the church, but in relation to Christ.

Knitter holds a God-centred view of other religions, but continues to press the necessity of Christ, but within the Trinity and activity of God.

Lastly, Knitter says that a salvation-centred approach preserves the value and the necessity of church, Christ, and God, as it holds up soteria (salvation), or human ecological well-being, as the context and criterion for a theology and dialogue of religions.

Kritzinger (1986: 110) affirms that this is a challenging and even disturbing book by Knitter, which stretches the mind and calls for response. According to Verstraelen (1985: 78) the book offers a well-designed and clear overview of the present state of thinking regarding Christian theologies of religion.

However, this model still does not deal with the aspect of repentance for wrongdoing in the name of mission and for mission's alliance with the past colonial authorities and remaining systems of colonial oppression. What is evident is that repentance was not and still is not on the agenda. Thus, Christianity should be forced to recognize this untold story about its broken past. For this reason, the debate will, in a sense be personalized, or contextualized, for that matter, in the following chapter.



CHAPTER 4

The Nature of Dialogue

In this chapter an attempt will be made to determine to which extent the current approaches to and nature of dialogue hinder or help the process of reconciliation in South Africa.

The Theocentric Model has been expanded and elaborated on, because it is the best model for entering into interreligious dialogue in the twentieth century. This model acknowledges the differences amongst the great religions, but offers an opportunity for all people from different religious backgrounds to appreciate and be sensitive towards diverse religious ways of life. Although there are different religious viewpoints, believers are bound by the Eternal One and can see one another as neighbours, rather than as enemies.

Knitter proposes a correlational and globally responsible model for dialogue. It is a model *“in which all sides are able to hear and be challenged by the others and at the same time to speak and challenge in return”* (Knitter, 1995: 24). This model also suggests that dialogue must be globally responsible. Dialogue must clearly indicate its agenda of dealing with issues, such as globalization and its implication for people of different faiths.

The way to go about doing this is, firstly by appropriating this model in the debate, by focusing on apartheid as an extension of the colonial onslaught, or an indirect consequence thereof and as an offspring of globalization.

Secondly, there will be a reflection on the demands of reconciliation and social change in post-apartheid South Africa. Thirdly, a focus on the nature of dialogue according to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and to what extent this views of dialogue lives up to the demands of reconciliation in the South African context. From there on, other voices and comments will be reflected on.

In the South African context, Christianity in the twentieth century has grown drastically. Census recordings in 1990 have shown that 76 per cent (76%) of Africans, 92.1 per cent (92.1%) of South African whites, 86 per cent of Coloureds and 13 per cent (13%) of Indians referred to themselves as Christians (Johnstone, 1993: 493). It goes without saying that Christians were the majority in the country. Thus, Christian institutions were vastly prominent and influential in all spheres of the social, political and cultural history of the region. As mentioned previously, some South Africans in the twentieth century used Christian doctrine to justify unjust doctrines of racial segregation, the most notably of all, apartheid.

Much attention has been given to political policy to redress the social ills created by apartheid in South Africa. Through institutions like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Reconstruction and Development

Programme (RDP), the current South African Government has tried to speak to and address the needs of people at the grassroots level.

The people addressed are generally known as the ordinary people from historically disadvantaged communities. Most of them were considered Christian, although there were also people from different kinds of religions, but particularly they were non-white and poor. These people were targeted as the object of the reforms initiated by the current government.

The TRC focused on truth, because the state must bring to light and account for incidents of abuse and ill governance of the past regime. The TRC must clarify certain questions such as, "Who were the victims? Who were the perpetrators? What are the nature and extent of repression and reconciliation?" The questions must be clarified because, any society emerging from repression has to recover from its past and come to terms with a substantial legacy of conflict and confusion.

But what is the Christian Church's role in reuniting her members who have been estranged from one another, through the colonial onslaught and the life-threatening and dehumanizing process of apartheid in South Africa?

Christians have been alienated from one another and there exists a need for the re-establishment of Christian norms and values, based on the search for community, as Christian brothers and sisters. Christians can succeed through a

process of introspection and reflection. This is not only reflection on the force that Christianity had on the destruction of community, but also reflection for restoration. By engaging in the process of introspection and reflection, Christians can come to the realization that reconciliation is desperately needed.

This search for community and process of introspection and reflection will lead them to see that, for the vitality of the Christian religion and discipleship in the future, which is a necessary step and will also provide a framework for intra-Christian dialogue.

I address the issues of reconciliation in the African and South African context as an African Christian, who is inspired by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. I also believe that the Bible is the word of God for human orientation and direction. I believe in a God who is active throughout and within the whole of creation and who wants to establish community with all of humanity and thereby fulfil His mission.

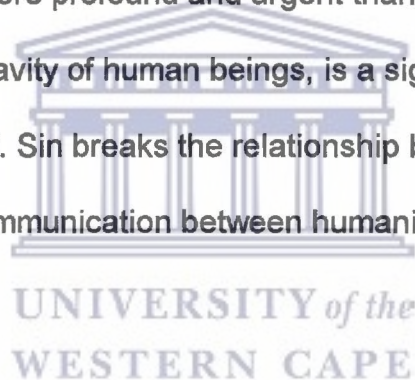
Central to this discussion is the Chiang Mai consultation, constituted by the World Council of Churches (WCC), which served as a proposal for the search for community through dialogue. God created people to live in harmony. In more ways than one the colonial legacy has created barriers that have alienated people from God and the effect of His blessing in their lives. Therefore, these barriers between God and human must be taken away so that humans may experience God's blessing in their lives. Healing is needed so that the energies

perverted and rendered powerless by alienation can be restored and become productive again, resulting in an improved experience of life for all.

Reconciliation within the South African context

There are many definitions of reconciliation, but I will focus on one which defines reconciliation as *"the act of reconciling parties at variance; it refers to the renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity"*.

The process of reconciliation is personal and individual. But Krishna (1993 :5) says that reconciliation is far more profound and urgent than the renewal of friendship. Brokenness, a depravity of human beings, is a sign of sinfulness and sin alienates humans from God. Sin breaks the relationship between God and humanity, so that the line of communication between humanity and God is severed.



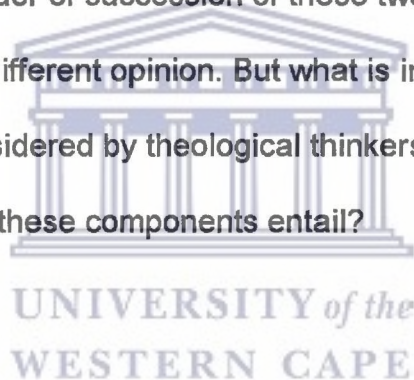
This sinfulness also alienates humans from one another. It is clear that to Krishna, every broken relationship in human lives, arises from their initial alienation from God. This condition holds humans in the prison house of our own self-centeredness (Krishna, 1993:6).

Thus, this sinfulness has culminated in distorted relationships between people, causing poverty, oppression, marginalization, and the exclusion of people from sharing in the proceeds of God's endowed prosperity and His power to enable them to be a freed human beings in the world (Boesak, 1984). It is therefore

clear that these ills imprisoned the human being and thus led to need for liberation through reconciliation.

Reconciliation thus considered, is costly and cannot and must not be superficial or for self- or personal interests, but it must be truly effective and restorative. In what way can reconciliation be successfully achieved? It can be done through the processes of forgiveness and repentance, which are indispensable for achieving the goal of reconciliation in South Africa.

Theologians disagree on the order of succession of these two components and almost every theologian has a different opinion. But what is important to note is that these components are considered by theological thinkers as crucial for true reconciliation. But what do these components entail?



4.1.1 Repentance

Firstly, by genuine repentance is meant a sense of contrition on the part of those who have institutionalized racism and who have laboured so adamantly to build a society on racist attitudes. Repentance is more than just saying sorry, it is also a commitment to a real change of heart. Repentance in this context, includes a readiness to abandon all claims of racial superiority and uniqueness.

4.1.2 Forgiveness

Forgiveness is also another essential part of reconciliation. Forgiveness is seen

as a genuine willingness to release the party who has wrongly used us, from our judgment so that we bear no ill memories. According to the apostle Paul, people can only forgive one another by virtue of a mandate from the Divinity and the essence of forgiveness lies in reconciliation between God and humanity (Bronkhorst, 1995: 41). What this means is that people are under obligation from God to allow forgiveness in order to restore broken relationships.

However, people should not and cannot be forced to forgive, because forgiveness, often, demands a complex psychological process. Therefore, people should only forgive, when they are ready to do so.

John de Gruchy (1998: 178) says that forgiveness can only be a response to repentance and confession. Denise Ackermann (Botman, 1996: 55) also states that forgiveness without penitence is impossible and that we need to mourn for the injustices of the past, before we can hope for reconciliation in the future.

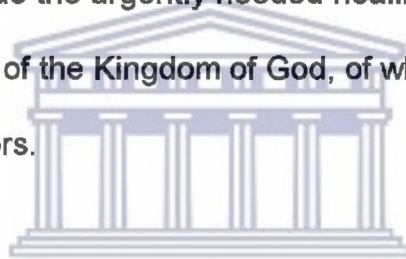
Hannah Arendt (1958) wrote that "*Men are not able to forgive, what they cannot punish*".

Hence, forgiveness should not be an act of powerlessness, a *testimonium paupertatis* (Bronkhorst, 1995: 41). This can succeed in healing and true reconciliation, which is not only the establishment of a new reality, a realm of grace and forgiveness and also of justice.

While the majority of black people in South Africa consider themselves to be

Christian, few black Christian churches have attempted to spell out what forgiveness entails in South Africa today. Perhaps because other more important and pressing problems occupy the agenda of black Christian church leaders in South Africa today. However, South Africa longs for forgiveness and repentance. The leading role in these processes should actually not only be initiated but also spearheaded by the Christian church in South Africa.

Thus, the role for the Christian churches in South Africa is to re-assert their prophetic, life-changing mission and step right into the midst of the religiously diverse arena, in order to provide the urgently needed healing, to reconcile and to promote the supreme values of the Kingdom of God, of which all Christians are supposed to be ambassadors.



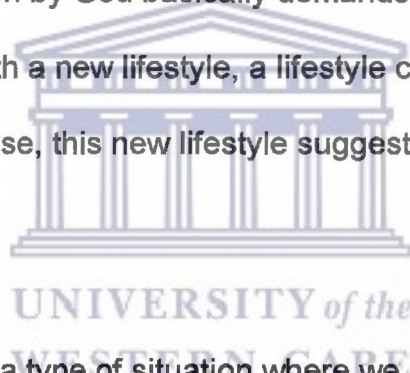
The challenge can be effectively met only by showing the world a new way forward from alienation to reconciliation. In this project, Christian leaders must and should be leaders of the leaders.

The end of colonialism and the achievement of political self-determination have not brought an end to alienation in the African experience. The alienation of colonialism has gone, but other forms of alienation have taken over. Some sources of alienation within the African and South African situation are ethnic rivalries, conflicting political ideologies, competing religions, clashes between African values and Western secularised values and unrealised expectations. To a large extent, these are very much the everyday realities that black Christians

are experiencing in South Africa.

In this context, reconciliation must be understood as a freeing of humans from the dehumanising impact of alienation. This type of reconciliatory environment would suggest the establishment of a new reality, of a realm of not only of grace and forgiveness, but also of justice.

God's saving action forces Christians to be actively involved in the new reality that was initiated by Him, in order not only to unite humans with Him, but also humanity as a whole. This action by God basically demands a new society and secondly it demands people with a new lifestyle, a lifestyle characterized by harmony with creation. In a sense, this new lifestyle suggests a new type of world community.



This new society clearly states a type of situation where we as Christians have to be committed to God's vision of re-establishing community, of taking up discipleship in obedience and of making this vision their mission. Thus, in their act of discipleship, in search of community in anticipation of God's kingdom they will further God's vision of *"the comprehensive wellbeing of all human beings within the context of the comprehensive well-being of their entire social and natural contexts"* (Botman, 1996: 50). The Christian church will thus establish its indispensability of being God's tool in reuniting the world, reuniting creation, but more than this, reuniting South African Christians with one another.

4.2 Religion and society in providing the platform for reconciliation

Religion can contribute to the stability of society by giving content to a value system and can provide motivation and inspiration. It helps to establish a group mentality and identity. It also has a social function of reflecting critically on policies that do not have the religious believers' interests at heart. Religion can fulfil these goals on a number of levels, such as the spiritual and intellectual levels, and through exemplary actions in social, political, economic and other areas.

But religion can also function negatively, insofar as it legitimizes a negative status quo, as in the South African context and elsewhere in Africa. All too easily, the Gospel and a Christian world-view can be converted into a dangerous ideology which does not promote full human well-being, a world-view is forced and distorted, into a one-sided view of what life is should be.

According to Van der Walt (1997:14), a deeper and more systematic reflection on the relation between religion and society is necessary in order not to make the same mistake as when a wrong political ideology, namely apartheid, was condoned by some followers of the Christian religion in South Africa. That is why religion and society should be distinguished from each other. But distinction should not imply separation, because there should be an active participation of religion in the political sphere.

This active participation of religion Van der Walt (1997:14) calls, the independent office, described as the office of the prophets. By proposing this, Van der Walt is re-establishing the aged-old tradition of the vital role that the prophets played in bringing God's message to both the political and ecclesiastical leaders.

For the future, says Van der Walt (1997:15), there is a need to revive this very important prophetic task to continuously remind both church and state of their God-ordained task. The prophetic ministry or role is thus seen as the *"third force"*. This type of relation between church and state suggests a well-developed philosophy of society inspired by God's revelation.

But religion is a human response to God and thus, fallible. Thus, the object of obedience to God should not be religious activity, but trust in God. For example, something can be adorned with a biblical text, e.g. apartheid ideology, but it can be totally unbiblical.

Thus, religion can be instrumentally used to criticize the status quo, but at the same time it can be used to support an unjust status quo.

In South Africa, political power was used to impose on society an ideological model of social life that was peculiar to, and sanctioned by, a religion that was peculiar to one group within the society. Christianity used Christian theological resources to promote apartheid. What happened during the apartheid era was

not just a dehumanizing oppression of people, especially black people, but a destruction of the *"basis of African self-respect and creativity"* (Mofokeng in Boesak, 1995: 67). It is clear that religion was caught up in the processes of subjugation of and thus alienation of the masses, which without a doubt, calls for repentance and forgiveness.

Reconciliation in the South African context does not mean the renovation of old relationships, built upon new norms and values within a differently structured society. It is a sense of changing thoughts, changing attitudes and behaviour towards our fellow pilgrims.



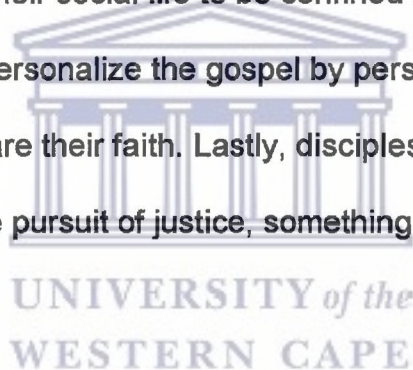
Christianity and the Christian Church should play the role of facilitating change in anticipation of the coming of God's Kingdom, so that the whole of humanity, as heirs to the kingdom, can share in God's prosperity and riches. As stated previously, the Christian Church should give expression to God's vision as a search for justice, love, freedom, equality, peace and wholeness in which all relationships are joyful, just and loving (Botman, 1996: 50). God and His purpose should be the basis for establishing a just and a religious responsible society, as is also propagated by the Theocentric Model. As the model suggests, the Christian's endeavours in the world must always be in relation to and with others, with love as the driving force.

The Christian church can change society, but in order for the church to do so, it has to change itself. It should not be only a mirror image of society and the

political order or structure, but should critically support society through endeavours of reconciling the divided in South Africa. Therefore, in anticipation of receiving deliverance as a world community, the Christian church must be "world and kingdom-centred" (De Gruchy and Petersen, 1991: 50).

4.3 The role of discipleship towards giving expression to reconciliation

With the future in mind, discipleship, through the process of reconciliation, requires action that matches the words Christians speak. Discipleship demands that Christians refuse to allow their social life to be confined to a select circle of fellow believers and that they personalize the gospel by personal engagement with neighbours who do not share their faith. Lastly, discipleship demands that Christians fight and strive in the pursuit of justice, something which Knitter's Theocentric Model also urges.




David Lochhead says the abovementioned actions necessitate a context of dialogue, which he calls the "dialogical imperative" (Lochhead, 1988: 79,80), as mentioned previously. This endeavour of humanity, in the context of the Gospel, is identified as a response to fulfil the commandment of neighbourly love. It is the sort of commitment that expresses the notion that by dehumanizing one's neighbour, one dehumanizes oneself.

The Christian church must regard it as her role to liberate both white and black people from prejudices, particularly racial prejudices, and from fear of each

other. The Christian church has in the past communicated separation and alienation, now Christian discipleship must give expression to relatedness and world familyhood in God the creator, through active participation in dialogue. Once again, the Christian church must recommit itself in efforts toward a theocentricism, with God as the centre of all praxis to re-establish community.

A satisfactory model of reconciliation must bring together not only Christians, but also adherents of diverse religions and ideologies. The model must bring people together in a unity of purpose and action, that attacks the alienating powers experienced in the everyday world.



An effective reconciliatory action poses the following requirements: critical involvement, which suggest an active personal involvement in the contexts of those who are alienated by whatever forms, cause human brokenness. An overriding commitment to justice in order to advance a utilitarian context where the interests of all are taken to heart, thereby strengthening the weak and rejecting the abuse of power. An open dialogue. Lastly, an empowering action, which promotes efforts to increase the ability of the other to act.

According to Dirkie Smit (Botman, 1996: 101), the Christian religion is a *"remembering religion"* and *"the truth about us must be told to us"* from outside from God. Thus, Christians must pay cognisance to their actions and where they have mistreated people, or acted in a manner that is not part of God's mandate to act for reconciliation, they must accept responsibility.

4.4 The World Council of Churches and the nature of dialogue

4.4.1 The Consultation in Chiang Mai, 1979

Representatives from the whole spectrum of the ecumenical movement, the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants and Evangelicals participated in this meeting. All in all there were 85 delegates from 36 countries who constituted the consultation meeting.

According to Thomas (Samartha, 1977: 180), the purpose of the consultation was threefold:

- 1). To clarify the Christian basis for seeking community by focusing theological reflection on special issues and particular contexts;
- 2). To indicate the nature of the Christian community within the human community in a pluralist world;
- 3). To suggest to Christian communities "*guidelines*" of service and witness, without diluting their faith or compromising their commitment to Christ.

These Guidelines on Dialogue, issued by the Central Committee in 1979, still constitute the official policy of the WCC concerning interreligious dialogue.

A starting point for dialogue is the declaration on the relationship of the Christian Church to non-Christian religions. The declaration is not a dogmatic pronouncement, but express fundamental attitudes towards other religions. The dialogue principle consists of joint discussion, practical cooperation, and the

confrontation of different experiences.

Truthfulness to God necessitates a brotherly relation, or attitude, to the other. This attitude establishes the fact that the other must be accepted as the neighbour, irrespective of race, nationality, religion or culture. Ariarajah (1977: 55) agrees and says that the need for dialogue, in principle, arose out of the recognition of the fundamental unity of human beings. We commit ourselves, as one family, to strive and, if necessary, to be ready to pay a price in order to realize the equality and dignity of all human beings (Samartha, 1977: 55). Dialogue is thus seen as a means to give expression to a common humanity and a striving towards realizing a world community.

In short, dialogue is seen as twofold. Firstly, a pragmatic dialogue, to remove all misunderstandings and to serve as a common human task; a dialogue that is more urgent than ever. Secondly, a fundamental dialogue, which is the open exchange of witness, experience, cross-questioning and listening.

Amongst others, some of the issues that were reflected on were:

What are the insights from within the Christian faith, that help Christians to relate themselves as communities of service and witness to their neighbours? What is the significance of people of other faiths and cultures, in the Christian perspective? Is God at work, among people of other faiths and ideologies?

Thus dialogue is recognized *"as having a distinctive and rightful place within*

Christian life and in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service”

(Samartha, 1977: 186). Dialogue is thus viewed together with other services of love. Dialogue is seen as service or love in the form of trying to understand.

De Silva (Samartha, 1977: 55) saw the nature of dialogue as taking place in three forms:

- a). Intellectual, the conceptual clarification and understanding of the teachings of different religions are sought.
- b). Experiential, where people seek to share one another's spiritual and historical experience.
- c). Socio-political, where there is a common search for just and stable community.

All three forms of dialogue are interrelated and all three can occur within the same dialogue.



It should be kept in mind, however, that dialogue is not the responsibility of church or religious leaders, but of each and every believer, irrespective of creed or confession.

4.5 The purpose of dialogue as seen by the World Council of Churches (WCC)

One goal of dialogue purely concerns the religious realm and tries to understand who our neighbour is, why he/she believes what he/she believes. Thus, the process becomes mutually enriching, enables mutual correction and succeeds

with a common affirmation of truth, where possible. The most important goal is a common search for community under God, a sharing by all faiths, towards the Ultimate Reality.

Another goal of dialogue, which is strongly linked to social life, is to achieve a truly human community based upon justice, peace and brotherhood. It is the type of community that Christians should seek with others, a common humanity, which can sometimes be distorted, by sin and self-interest. Nevertheless, all humans are responsible for ethical relevance and demand a community in which applies human inter-relatedness which is sometimes ambiguous, because of the onslaught of secularism is used positively as a means to fight marginalization.

Such a community is a just interdependence of free people, which suggests a community of communities. Friedli says that the search for community is concretized by *"the communion of saints or believers in God, in hope in the fulfilment of the Gospel"* This a familiar conceptual approach, which is in line with the United Congregational Church of South Africa's (UCCSA), concept of church, which is a priesthood of believers, an equality in king and kingship in God's reign.

According to Vroom's (1984: 25) summary of the Consultation, 1) the term dialogue is best reserved for explicit verbal interchange on beliefs, ethics, customs and experiences; 2) the subjects of dialogue, namely experience, action, community and knowledge, inevitably involve explication and discussion

of beliefs; 3) dialogue, understood as discourse on the nature of things as they really are, necessarily entails the question of truth and therefore includes the ever present element of witness; and 4) the two essential aims of dialogue are mutual learning and achievement of fuller mutual understanding. From these points, Vroom draws his conclusion that dialogue is bearing witness.

Certain unresolved issues that were depicted by the Consultation, such as the nature of God's universal action in creation and His redemptive action in Jesus Christ were suggested for further attention.

Dialogue, according to the WCC, is also interpreted as working together for the improvement of society and, in political matters, the search for greater unity in the process of nation building (Samartha, 1977: 463). According to Cashmore (Samartha, 1977: 176) delegates from Africa to the Consultation, bore witness to the understanding of man within their traditional thinking and to the harm done to them by missions bringing Western splits and schisms

The latter point is a controversial and sensitive subject, for it affects the identity of the indigenous and the blacks and whites alike. It profoundly calls in question Christianity's theological discourse and methods of evangelism and at the same time it turns the spotlight on an established Church structure, which is seldom tolerant of forms of discourse and practice that are not in line with those authorized by tradition.

In the past Western Christians did the talking, now it is time to pause and listen, to reflect with open minds on the actual realities on which Christianity has set its seal, to assume as Christians the consequences of an invasion legitimated by a "*Christian*" theology, to take the decision for repentance and even conversion for the next five hundred years.

Together, Christians need to acknowledge their complicity in the events of past colonialization and present-day marginalization, not because they have been active agents, but because, in some way or other, by belonging to the Christian church and professing and practising the Christian religion, they are implicated (Tamez, 1992: 460). It is undeniable that the Christian church and Christian theology not only enabled the invasion from Europe, but also gave it legitimacy.

Tamez (1992: 462) says that once Western Christians have acknowledged the sin committed and their complicity in it, they should repent and ask forgiveness for those Christians who went before them, who used Christianity to subjugate individuals, peoples and nations.

Mveng (1977: 151) says that Africa is a fragile continent, surrounded by superpowers, invaded by ideologies seeking to dominate the world and propagate violence and war. For Mveng, all contemporary ideologies present in Africa's cultures are characterized by the search for power, political, social, economic as well as religious power.

The fascinating fact of religion in Africa is that converts of Christianity and Islam, particularly Christianity, easily return to their indigenous religions. Hence there is a resurgence of the vitality of many African-derived religions.

How can this process be reversed? How can what is good about Africa and African culture be celebrated, and what is bad in African Christianity and theology be denounced in unison with African traditionalist. How can the struggle be alleviated? The answer to this difficult but real and pressing question is **"RECONCILIATION THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS"**.

Reconciliation would create an opportunity for Christians to regain God's favour as his followers and disciples.



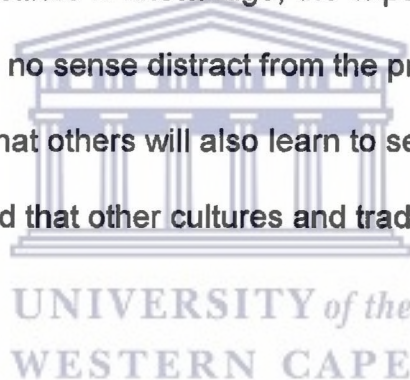
Guidelines have been introduced to facilitate dialogue among various religions. However, these guidelines for interreligious dialogue still do not seem to address the critical question of dealing with the colonial legacy, which was also made possible by means of Christian expansion.

Other forms of dialogue come to mind such as the North and South, between traditional and modern forms of religion, between economy and belief, between modern and mythical rationality, between church officials and ordinary faithful, between Christianity and other world religions.

4.6 The nature of the guidelines for dialogue

In the guidelines for dialogue, as drawn up by the Department on dialogue for the WCC, dialogue is considered a fundamental part of the Christian service of Love in the community and an expression of neighbourly love. Dialogue, as proposed by the guidelines, is a way of life, between proponents of different religious convictions for the purpose of peace in community. Fellowship, therefore, is an important goal in dialogue.

What is focused on in the guidelines is knowledge, the experience of faith and socio-political matters, which in no sense distract from the process of bearing witness. The idea therefore is that others will also learn to see things through the spectacles of the gospel and that other cultures and traditions will be compelled by Christian ideals.

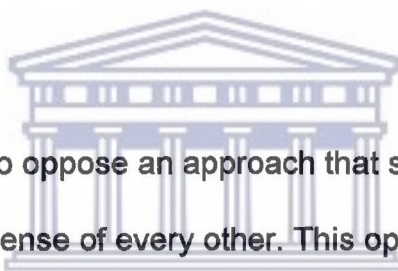


What is important to note in the group report in Addis Ababa in 1977, is that churches were urged to have a greater political consciousness and a more alert self-criticism of exploitation by the Church. This was an attempt by the Christian church to be more in tune with the traditional African believer's daily realities. In other words, there is a sensitivity concerning what Africans experience and what their needs as religious people are, in particular, African Christian religious people.

In Prague, 1992, at the assembly of the Conference of European Churches,

emphasis was laid on unity and reconciliation. In 1997, in a preparatory document of the Assembly, it was stated that true unity is possible, only insomuch as there is room for the brothers and sisters of the Second and Third Worlds to share in the spiritual and material riches of the planet (Vroom, 1992: 241).

This document is thus a commitment to a mutual struggle for a common humanity in the deliverance from poverty and strife. This document expresses in concrete terms the Christian principle of sharing with those who are underprivileged and do not have in this world.



The object of dialogue must also oppose an approach that sanctifies one culture and its thought forms at the expense of every other. This opposition will succeed in the eradication of the overtones of exclusivist tendencies in religion. Christians need to reflect on constant forgiveness and renewal, in which together they give thanks and praise God for his love and for his gifts.

In the context of black, feminist and Third-World theological approaches, the pain of the colonial era becomes very sharp. For blacks and others of colour, the question raised is God's whiteness; for women, God's maleness; for third-world Christians, God's colonialism. For these negative aspects, Christians have to be collectively accountable and accept responsibility. For those who ask all these questions the way is one of struggle, to find an identity and the validity of one's own existence and its legitimacy in God's kingdom.

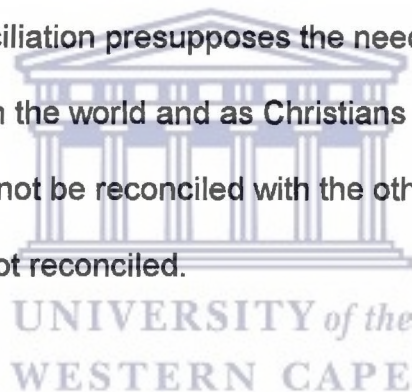
The intention with this discussion is to make Christians aware or to sensitize them to the radical repentance and conversion that is needed, in view of the sins that were committed when bringing the Christian religion to the other. This necessary conversion is to the God of life (theocentricism), justice and peace, which listens in all humility to the criticisms of the indigenous peoples who have been marginalized for almost five hundred years. Accepting the historic challenge of the indigenous movement, will give modern Christians an opportunity to take a critical and self-critical look at spirituality, missionary practice, theology, hermeneutics, ecclesiology and ecumenism.



CONCLUSION

The impression that most indigenous people and culture had was that of a God who was imposed by force as a sole God and Lord. Many various methods were used to make people accept the Christian faith. A lot of emphasis was put on death and judgment, hell and eternal damnation, in order to frighten people and compel them to accept Christianity. These methods still persist today, according to Tamez (1992: 458).

It has become clear that reconciliation presupposes the need to restore fellowship, both as Christians in the world and as Christians with one another. It is abundantly clear that we cannot be reconciled with the other if they themselves as Christians are not reconciled.



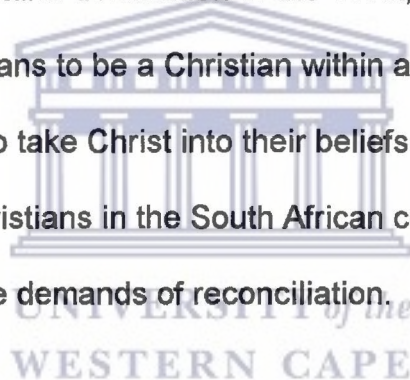
According to Tamez (1992: 458), what came to the indigenous were the historical events of the conquest supported by a Christian theology. Tamez's view alerts us to the inherent possibility of ambiguity in the understanding of the Christian God and the disastrous consequences this can have. This ambiguity is not a matter of intellectual concern, but of honesty concerning the ready justification of unjust practices by theology and the Bible.

Christian religion was associated with the barbarity of the conquest. Up till today, if we listen to the testimonies of blacks and indigenous people, we will

realize that the "conquest" is still continuing, although with different agents (Tamez, 1992: 459).

Christianity was characterized by arrogance and intolerance. In order to rectify past mistakes, Christians must recognize that they worship a God of love and that their approach to other religions must not be self-centred, but rather one of self-sacrifice, because that is what it means to love.

The role that the World Council of Churches (WCC) should play is to assist those who suffered from the cultural domination of the West, to reflect critically and meaningfully on what it means to be a Christian within a religious plural context, and to reflect on how to take Christ into their beliefs for challenge and renewal. Further than that, Christians in the South African context should express their commitment to the demands of reconciliation.



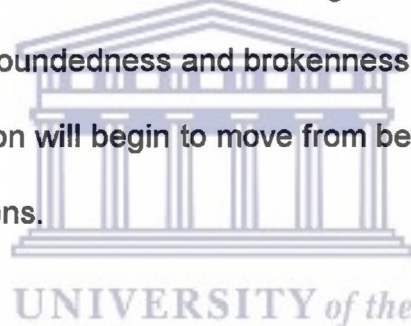
Christians should propagate reunion by overcoming the divisions between the churches, because they have often used the authority and power given to them to strengthen false and limited solidarities like racism, sexism and nationalism. Now they must seek possibilities for devoting themselves to mediation and reconciliation.

As Christians have to show that they, as the church are indispensable in reconciliation, so they have to question decisively the political and economic systems which misuse power and riches, which exploit the natural resources of

the world for their own use and perpetuate poverty and marginalization.

Christians have given the churches the mandate to strive against the trampling of human dignity, but they have not made this their own fight. Repentance, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation will not take place instantaneously, but are part of a process that necessitates critical reflection, confession and sometimes even restitution.

According to Michael Lapsley, in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), we cannot be healed until we recognize our sickness. He says that if we recognise our woundedness and brokenness and seek for healing, the South African nation will begin to move from being the polecat of the world to become a light to nations.



South African churches should make God the object of religious interaction in order to introduce a spirituality of reconciliation. This type of spirituality is a kind of antidote to extreme divisions of peoples, and rejects any continuation of such divisions. Thus, emphasize forgiveness and make an end to harbouring sentiments of animosity of ill-will.

I hope that some of my critical remarks may serve as a starting point for a more systematic theological reflection on the theme of interreligious dialogue in the future. In this way we can confront our past, and alleviate suffering in order to build the nation in obedience to God.

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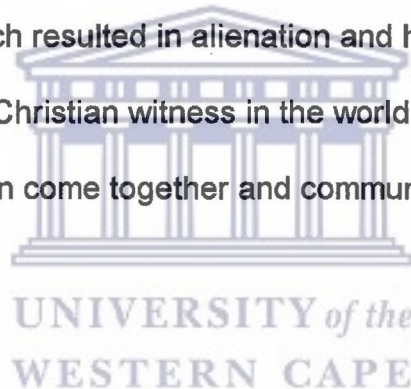
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Summary

This thesis starts the journey with the colonial legacy and its ills, which flows into expression such as apartheid, legitimized by Christianity, in the South African context. My hypothesis is that the legacy and the impact that it had on African indigenous people and religions, is not properly resolved and can be resolved through participating in active interreligious dialogue towards reconciliation.

It flows from the presupposition that repentance is needed, to restore existing tension between religions, which resulted in alienation and human brokenness. Thus threatened the vitality of Christian witness in the world. The answer to this is dialogue, in order that we can come together and communicate change and renewal.



This thesis also tries to accomplish the goal of showing how this need for interreligious dialogue becomes a need for intra-Christian dialogue within the South African context, a need to reestablish Christian community through discipleship. Thus, the nature of dialogue is crucial and should live up to the demands. I make certain recommendations as to what the nature of this dialogue should be.

In Chapter 1, I started by giving a brief to the fact of religious pluralism and the prospect thereof. I go further by reflecting on the why of interreligious dialogue

and it is important and why it is necessary for today. I clearly stated how it came about into existence and implications that it might have for future Christian mission and witness.

Thereafter, in **Chapter 2**, I explored the contours of the Colonial legacy in Africa and the influence Christianity had on indigenous culture and religiosity. Here I will give expression of how intolerant Christian mission, gravely misrepresented God's image. Hence the need for Christian to seek community through restoration.

In **Chapter 3**, I investigated and assessed certain models for interreligious dialogue to deal with the plurality of religions, as a necessary background to my focus, analysing and critiquing current guidelines for interreligious dialogue. I particularly looked at various Christian responses to the phenomenon of religious pluralism, as discussed by Paul Knitter, in his book *"No Other Name"*. I showed that even there the need for reconciliation exists.

In **Chapter 4** I appropriated one of Knitters models that suits the discussion the best, by focussing on apartheid as an extension of the colonial onslaught that not only divided followers from different religions from each other, but also divided Christians from each other. I applied the World Council of Churches' Guidelines for Dialogue with the demands of reconciliation, provided by the South African situation, in order to see whether it hindered or helped reconciliation.

In my conclusion I tried to show how in the South African context interreligious dialogue can serve as an opportunity or tool to reconcile Christians in South Africa. Thus, prioritizing repentance in the nature of dialogue after the vicious attacks of claims of superiority, universalism that distorted the Christian discipleship and alienated Christians from each other. We might thus, succeed in nation building and restoring relationship with each other and communion with God.



Opsomming

Hierdie tesis of proefskrif kry gestalte in die era van kolonisasie en die Christelike Kerk se aliانسie. Tydens hierdie tydperk is onvergeetlike skade aangerig aan inboorlinge van Afrika en hul gelowe. In die Suid Afrikaanse konteks het dit indirek oorsprong gegee aan die apartheid sisteem. Hierdie sisteem het groot skeiding en konflik veroorsaak tussen mense van verskillende gelowe en selfs tussen Christene. Hierdie konflikte nodig oplossing en evaluasie, want dit veroorsaak vervreemding en skend God se beeld as verlosser.



As Christene behoort ons ons te verbind tot regstelling en versoening. Versoening en vergifnis het kommunikasie en ekspressie nodig. Hierdie kommunisering van versoening kan realiseer deur die proses van dialoog. Volgens die probleemstelling is dit duidelik dat versoening nie op die prioriteitslys of agenda beklemtoon word, in gidslyne vir interreligieuse dialoog nie. Die impak van Christelike sending hang tot 'n groot mate af van, ons toegewydheid tot versoening en tot hoe 'n mate, ons uiting of gestalte gee aan restorering. Vandaar dan die behoefte aan 'n dialoog wat gebaseer is op versoening, vergifnis en heling.

In Hoofstuk 1, gee ek 'n algemene inleiding of beskrywing van die bestaan van religieuse pluralisme, waarom dit bestaan en wat die implikasies daarvan is.

Ek reflekteer ook op die belangrikheid en moontlikhede wat dit vir die toekoms van Christelike sending en getuienis, inhou.

Hoofstuk 2, fokus op die kontoere van die ingewikkelde proses van kolonialisasie in Afrika en die invloed wat Christenskap op inheemse mense, hul religie en kultuur gehad het. Hier let ek veral op na die feit dat daar byna geen tolleransie van inheemse religieuse agtergrond, gehandhaaf was deur Christelike sending nie. Daarom nog meer die behoefte aan versoening en vergifnis.

Ek gaan verder deur in **Hoofstuk 3**, te kyk na sekere bestaande modelle vir interreligieuse dialoog, as 'n basis vir my analise en kritiek. Ek fokus veral op die modelle, soos saamgevat deur Paul Knitter in sy boek, "*No Other Name*". Hier is dit ook dan nogmaals duidelik dat die kreet na versoening al luider word.

Hoofstuk 4 dui op 'n hermeneutiese behandeling van die natuur van die dialoog wat vereis word deur beleidenis en versoening in die Suid Afrikaanse samelewing. Ek neem 'n toepassing van die Wêreld Raad van Kerke (WRK) se gidslyne vir dialoog tot die vereistes van versoening in die Suid Afrikaanse konteks en situasie. Hiermee word dan bepaal of hierdie gidslyne die proses van versoening bevoordeel of benadeel.

As konklusie probeer ek wys hoe die natuur van interreligieuse dialoog kan dien as instrument of boublok in die versoeningsproses in Suid Afrika. Hiermee word

belydenis bo aan die agenda van dialoog geplaas en sodoende vewyder ons van die euwels wat agterlaat was deur kolonialisasie. Daarmee bereik ons ook dan ons doel om God se beeld in die wêreld, ook onder Christene te herstel. Dus deel ons ook in God se missie, wat die soeke is na gemeenskap en verhouding.



Keywords

pluralism, interreligious, dialogue, colonialism, traditional, repentance,
forgiveness, reconciliation, guidelines, witness, mission





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