

The Interreligious Dialogue

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Premise

My experience of interreligious dialogue does not originate from any particular or striking event of my life, but from every day living in a world which become more and more a “global village”. As a student in theology I would like to take more in consideration this dimension of faith, by being able to dialogue with the members of other religions, which implies knowledge of own faith and capacity of recognizing the presence of spirit of God in the other religions. The issue of interreligious dialogue is a new topic not only for Christians, but also for other religions (Judaism, Islamism, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.). The issue is a very delicate one, which requires full knowledge of the other, capacity for dialogue and openness to God’s working in the humankind. My questions are first of all focused on the nature of this dialogue. How has to be this dialogue? What are its goals? What can the religions (i.e. Christians) expect from this dialogue? What can be the starting point of their dialogue? How to understand the existence of so many religions?

Social and theological relevance

The religions had and still have a relevant influence in shaping the consciences, the cultures, the approach to life, to others and to relate to other religions also. Therefore the religions still have a huge responsibility in evolution of humankind and in its accompany toward God. Theirs is also the responsibility of a proper interreligious dialogue which can improve our existence and peace in the world.

Nowadays the awareness of the other religions is lived more pacifically and tolerantly than in the past, in spite of ongoing social-political events in our world in which the religion is often involved as a pretext for the conflict. After “centuries of civilization” we are more able to accept the others and to live the differences without feeling so much threaten or getting involved in “justified cruciades”. Religions often carried the banner of intolerance in the name of “the true God” and became involved in acts which are contradictory to their core. We can see that often behind this discriminatory attitudes there was an inadequate image of God and an immature theology. Nowadays we have an image of God (speaking from the side of Christian religion, but without denying this to the other religions also) which is not vindicative or intolerant and by consequence a theology which respects more the others and recognizes the values of the other religions. We dialogue and listen to each other with more sincerity and openness. There is less prejudice in the air and more knowledge of the other. In engaging to this dialogue I think is important to be careful at the tendency of relativism and syncretism which cannot be a solution to the dialogue itself. What are the

premises to be established from the beginning of such a dialogue to avoid any tendencies toward relativism and syncretism?

The Christian approach

In speaking about the interreligious dialogue I think that I have to present it, at least here, from the Christian side and more precisely from the catholic church stand. We have undergone in the last centuries and especially since Vatican Council II an impressive evolution in our understanding of the other religions. We do not use anymore the Bible to be intolerant toward those of other religions and we do not pretend anymore to have the monopoly on truth. We do not limit the possibility for redemption only to those who are baptised and are part of catholic church. "Outside of catholic church there is not salvation" is now a statement which does not make us so proud of our past theology, in the name of which we considered our sisters/brothers less worthy than us! The Catholic church has learned a lot from its errors and still has to learn. We were helped by the Holy Spirit to find his presence not only inside the catholic church! We are helped now to view positively and appreciate the other religions. Their presence cannot be ignored, but considered with deeper discernment and openness toward dialogue. Moreover, J.Dupuis goes further in asserting: "Theologians today ask whether Christian and catholic theology can affirm that the religious traditions have in the eternal plan of God for humankind a positive significance and are for their followers ways, means and channels of salvation willed and devised by God for their followers."

Is it possible to assert this without compromising the faith in Jesus Christ as the unique saviour of the world? Does a religion pluralism deny the uniqueness of Christ? If we affirm together with the VCII that redemption can also be achieved through following the conscience, is not implicitly recognizing a somehow redemptive character of this religions? Are they redemptive in themselves? What's God intention about them? How to understand the elements of "truth and grace" (K.Rahner) or the "seeds of the Word" (CVII) within these religions in a more constructive way?

Conclusions

The Christians have to involved themselves in such a dialogue from which they can be ready not only to give, but also to receive. All the sides have to maintain their identity, but at the same time do not absolute it! And Christians too? How to keep in balance "your truth" (or *the* truth) and a honest dialogue? How relevant can be a "pneumatological theology" for the interreligious dialogue? Which starting point for the interreligious dialogue? How much influence can have a positive interreligious dialogue on the peace in the world, politic sphere, religious life of the people?

Bibliography:

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