

No.17/83

15th, November, 1983

In this Issue: REPORT OF THE SEDOS SEMINAR ON DIALOGUE WITH
BUDDHISTS
held on Tuesday, October, 11, 1983.

The issue also contains a copy of a circular letter received by the editor of Sedos from a Maryknoll Missionary in Bangladesh. He lives among a Muslim people and his letter illustrates at the level of every day life., ~~what~~ living in a situation of dialogue can mean.

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Coming Events:

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| Executive Committee Meeting. | Wednesday, November 16, 16.00 hrs.at Sedos Secretariate. |
| South Africa (Up-date) | Monday, November 21, 16.00 hrs. Speakers: Frs. Ignaz Dekkers and Jim McGrath, Assistant Generals, CSSr. |
| <u>Sedos Annual General Assembly</u> <u>and Seminar</u> <u>"Spirituality for Conflict"</u> | Christian Brothers Generalate. Via Aurelia 476. Tuesday, December 13, 1983. Speaker: Fr. Thomas Cullinan, OSB. |

News:

PIME Superior General: Our good wishes go to Fr. Galbiati on his election as Superior General of the Pontificio Instituto Missioni Estere (PIME).

The Sedos Seminar on Dialogue with Buddhists attended by thirty participants, was addressed by Fr. Marcello Zago OMI, Secretary to the Vatican Secretariate for Non-Christians and Fr. Edward Malone, MM, Secretary to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Both are deeply engaged in the work of dialogue in Asia, Fr. Zago's speciality being precisely with Buddhism. His two papers and his bibliography on Buddhism are reproduced in this issue of the Bulletin. The Seminar highlighted the need for a clarification of a theology for dialogue in keeping with the Vatican Council's new ecclesiology.

Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies. The Centre has moved to a new address at 294 Corso Vittorio Emanuele, IV Piano, int. 10; Tel. 656.44.14. There will be Satsang, Bhajan-Prayer-Meditation there on Saturday, November 26 from 5.00-6.00 p.m. Satsang will be held on the last Saturday of the month during the year.

The Centre is organising a week long session on Yoga-Vipassana Meditation in April 1984 and an International Seminar on "Development and Communication between Cultures" in September, 1984. Monthly talks on inter-religious topics will also continue throughout the year.

Fr. Stephen Lindemans CICM is returning to Kinshasa having completed six years as Secretary General of the Scheutists. We thank him for his help and collaboration with Sedos and wish him well in his new post. Welcome to Fr. Emilio Steels who succeeds Fr. Lindemans.

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SEDOS SEMINAR OCT. 11, 1983
DIALOGUE WITH BUDDHISTS

Following are the texts of Father Marcello Zago, OMI, Secretary to the Vatican Secretariate for Non Christian Religions given at the Sedos Seminar on "Dialogue with Buddhists" on Oct. 11, 1983. They consist of:

- I. A General Introduction on Dialogue with Buddhists to-day.
- II. An analysis in some detail of the situation of Dialogue with Buddhists in South-East Asian Theravāda Countries and in the Far-East: Mahāyāna Countries.
- III. A Selected Bibliography of Reviews on Dialogue with Buddhists.

I. DIALOGUE WITH BUDDHISTS TO-DAY

M. Zago, OMI.

INTRODUCTION

1. I have had a personal and continuing experience of dialogue with Buddhists from the year 1959 to 1975. Thereafter, my position was that of a spectator which, however, enabled me to widen my horizons to include other continents and other religions. The results of this experience can be found in my article and books over the years. (See, for example, La Chiesa in Asia Oggi, Bologna, 1983.)
2. The term dialogue should not be understood merely in a colloquial sense, but should include every kind of positive and constructive relationship with buddhists, with buddhist communities or lay people or monks, with institutions and societies which recognise themselves as buddhists.
3. Dialogue with Buddhists has unique characteristics because it deals with a religion essentially anthropocentric, even if it has transcendental perspectives. It is to be noted also that there is not one Buddhism only but there is a buddhist message, buddhist belief lived by people who have their own distinctive national and cultural histories.

The theme of to-day's Seminar is the global situation of buddhism in the different countries of Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions and also in the West. I shall deal in more special detail with the situations in Thailand and Japan and in the West.

I. PRINCIPAL FORMS OF DIALOGUE TO-DAY

These may be systematized as follows:

- a) Doctrinal dialogue which consists in the sympathetic and respectful encounter of the two faiths and doctrines in order to:

- grasp the existential values sought by buddhists be they spiritual leaders, learned or ordinary people.
- identify what it is that buddhists understand by the message and by the Christian life.
- reformulate Kerygma, Catechesis, theology.

This type of dialogue is being realized in different centres such as that of Alois Pieris, SJ in Sri Lanka, and in Japan. It is a dialogue which is laborious, specialized and necessary.

- b) Experiential religious dialogue which consists of sharing the experiences and the methods of one's spiritual journey - meditation, prayer, exchange of experiences in order to understand the other - from the inside, and to progress together. There are many examples among which is the Zen Centre of Fr. Lassalle in Japan. The present visit of about twenty Benedictine monks to Japan where they will stay in Buddhist monasteries is another example. Many Christians and Buddhists have already lived such experiences. It is a delicate dialogue, demanding preparation and discernment which correspond to profound requirements.

- c) Dialogue of human - social co-operation aimed at the promotion of development, justice, education, service of the other, the ordinary person, based on common religious values and motivations. The Centre of Fr. Tissa Balasuriya is one example among the many to be found in Sri Lanka while other examples are found among centres for refugees, the handicapped, etc.

This is an important form of renewal of the respective religions in the service of mankind. It is still a form of dialogue for elites, more widespread than the two preceding forms.

- d) Existential "lived" dialogue, the ordinary day to day living together with "the other" motivated by and illuminated by their respective faiths. It can be and should be practiced by all and is the basic form which makes possible all the others. It is possible when the different communities are progressively respectful of each other and conscious of each other's separate religious identity.

In a local Church these various forms of dialogue are not mutually exclusive but complementary.

II. NEED FOR AND MOTIVATIONS FOR DIALOGUE WITH BUDDHISTS ESPECIALLY IN COUNTRIES OF BUDDHIST TRADITIONS.

1. Internal Motivations related to inter ecclesial life: The survival of
 - a) many Christian communities depends on positive relations with the surrounding milieu and on a conscious approach to the Buddhist people.
 - b) Inculturation, an urgent need of the local Churches, is impossible without dialogue in its diverse forms, otherwise inculturation remains at the 'laboratory' level and will perpetuate the ghetto.
 - c) Both the passing on of the message and presenting the meaning of the Church will become relevant only in a climate of continual encounter.
 - d) Encounter with Buddhism according to R. Guardini, is the greatest challenge to Christianity: it demands a deepening at both the **experiential** and theological levels.

2. Extra-ecclesial motivations related to the Kingdom of God of which the Church is the sign and instrument:
- a) supporting unity and progress among peoples who find in religions both a positive leaven but also negating circumstances. The Church has the role of bringing about a better world. Mutual understanding is the necessary condition for this.
 - b) helping religions to become better ways of salvation. In this sense it is possible to say that dialogue has as aim to make buddhists better buddhists. But the inverse is also true.
 - c) fulfilling the specific role of the Church in view of salvation, which is one and which is realized fully and definitively in the eschatology. Dialogue then becomes co-operation towards achieving the salvation which God wills and brings about for all mankind.

III. DIALOGUE: PERSPECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS IN THE MISSION OF TOMORROW

We are at the beginning of a new missionary era the directions of which we can already discern. The SEDOS Congress (1981) has already indicated some. One that is evident is dialogue, not only in order to reach the great religions remaining untouched but also because of the nature of mission itself. Dialogue should become a modality of mission to such an extent that it characterises all missionary activity and should also have its own place as a specific form of mission.

Difficulties in dialogue will not be wanting, as for example, certain anti-religious forms of government, a possible theological retrenchment in the Church, superficiality and lack of preparation on the part of those engaged in dialogue both at individual and community levels.

The requirements for making dialogue more effective and workable concern the whole missionary project (persons, means, community support) and the professional, spiritual and theological preparation of missionaries themselves both young and older.

II. DIALOGUE WITH BUDDHISTS

M. Zago, OMI

(Translated by W. Dunphy. SVD)

I. THE SITUATION - SOUTH-EAST ASIAN THERAVADA COUNTRIES

There are common characteristics to be found in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Sri Lanka. While their cultures show an influence from India, the ethnic substratum of each country gives to each its particular physiognomy. The official religion, which is also that of the majority, is theravāda buddhism, but it must be specified that it is a buddhism deeply influenced by symbiosis with ancestral animism. Throughout the area Christianity is very reduced and only touches minority groups, often of foreign origin, despite centuries-long missionary activity - with the exception of Sri Lanka where the number of Christians reaches 8%.

Still, contacts between Christians and Buddhists have not been wanting in the past, particularly at the beginning. In the 17th cent. in Thailand Jesuits such as Fathers Le Blanc, de la Breuille and Du Bouchet "attempted to familiarize themselves with those inhabitants and to adapt themselves to them", and they came to the realization that "in terms and customs and habits a Christian could not teach anything more than was already prescribed by their own religion". In Burma, Catholic Bishops of the 17th and 18th centuries, like Percoto, Mantegazza and Bigandet, have left us many tracts on both canonical (official) and lived Buddhism. In Cambodia Fr. Maldonado attempted to "assimilate himself as far as possible to the bonzes with their yellow dress, in order to sow the seed of salvation in the buddhist convents themselves." In Sri Lanka the impact of Christianity showed less respect for local traditions in the opening period under the Portuguese (1505-1656) than under the Dutch (1656-1796) and English (1796-1954).

Missionaries, despite a real sympathy for the culture and the socio-philosophic systems, and especially for the peoples among whom they lived, did not achieve either a sympathetic objective vision of Buddhism or any in-depth dialogue with Buddhists. They were prevented not only by the prejudices of the time but especially by the theological standard with which they regarded other religions, considering them as human aberrations and diabolical deceptions. Colonization accentuated the difficulties of reciprocal comprehension, even if, particularly in Thailand, the Catholic school system promoted mutual esteem between the parties concerned.

Following the arrival of independence, various factors have promoted contacts between Christians and Buddhists, e.g., the emergence of Christians from their ghettos in the villages and the progress of urbanization, the need for social collaboration, international and interconfessional meetings, and finally a new view of other religions, particularly among Catholics after Vatican II.

BURMA

Burma seems to be the country where dialogue remains on the lowest level. Of course, some advance has been made in the direction of dialogue, as can be seen from the studies of Pasquale Anatriello and Winston L. King, but such dialogue has not been promoted whether by religious leaders or by the faithful. Memories of English colonization, the struggle (with ephemeral success) to make Buddhism the state religion, the attitude of the present government - socialist and secular - all these factors have prevented the Buddhists from opening their horizons to this dimension. On the Christian side there was first a feeling of being under attack from the Buddhist reprisal, and then they lost the majority of the foreign missionaries. This latter forced the remaining ministers to concentrate their efforts on service to the Christian communities who for the most part belong to non-Buddhist ethnic groups. Limited foreign contact and the reduced number of indigenous clergy have hampered any direct promotion of dialogue.

CAMBODIA

Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Cambodia was a short experience. This took place between 1970 and 1975. Before this period any real encounter was impossible, despite the efforts of clergy like Mons. Ramousse and Mons. Tep Im. Most Christians were, or considered themselves to be, foreigners. After the coup d'état of March 1970 only 3 or 4 thousand of the 70,000 Catholics remained in the country, the rest either departing for Vietnam or being confined in camps for foreigners. Finding themselves alone and without any proper social work, especially without schools, the Khmer Christians felt both obliged and encouraged to enter into dialogue with their Buddhist compatriots.

Beyond individual dialogue, in which they had been progressively introduced through both ordinary pastoral direction and special courses, Christians in the cities became involved in care for refugees whose numbers grew continually because of the war. Such charitable service brought with it increasing contact with the authorities and with Buddhist leaders. Other contacts were organized between Christians and qualified lay Buddhists to promote reciprocal understanding. Courses and discussions took place at Pnom-Penh and elsewhere.

The presence of Benedictine monks seemed a favourable and promising element. The monastery at Kep had remained for long a place of prayer quite removed from Buddhist monastic experience, just as also the convent of the Carmelite Sisters at Pnom-Penh. The war brought the Catholic monks into contact with Buddhists. Some bonzes found asylum in the monastery, and some young Buddhists joined the monks, not to become Christians, but to live that type of religious life. Reciprocal influence was great not only for mutual understanding but also for adaption. Buddhists began to accept the Christian monks as true religious and acted on this understanding, organizing, for example, the traditional offering of religious dress (kathina).

The "liberation" of Pnom-Penh in April 1975 signaled the end of all religious structures, Christian and Buddhist. Manual labour in the jungle, constant movement, courses of political indoctrination, suffering - all contributed to reducing the Khmer to a common destiny,

and the majority of the hundred thousand monks was massacred between 1975 and 1979.

LAOS

Laos is certainly the country where dialogue, better planned and benefiting from sustained animation, has been able to reach the members of both religions on a broader scale whether among those responsible or the faithful, even to the extent of acting as a stimulus in neighbouring countries. Thanks to a national office and diocesan coordinators - maintained by the episcopal conference who also promoted the setting up of these - all those engaged in pastoral work have been helped to renew their vision and their methods. Meeting between Christians and Buddhists have multiplied on the levels of friendship, mutual understanding, sharing of profound experiences, and collaboration. In-depth research on Buddhism as it is lived and on special questions, such as the concept of the Divine in the various ethnic groups, Christian and Buddhist ethics, religious language, has been carried out. This dialogue has also produced some official recognition as is seen in the visit to the Pope by a delegation of Buddhists led by the Buddhist patriarch of Laos himself.

The depth and sincerity of this dialogue could be measured when the foreign missionaries were expelled by Luang-Prabang in August 1975. The Buddhist patriarch did his utmost to change the Party decision, but without success. He then wished to demonstrate the attitude of the Buddhists by organizing a solemn farewell ceremony in his monastery and personally seeing the missionaries off at the airport. The anti-religious measures which the government have taken with increasing intensity both against Christians and Buddhists have not wiped out the benefits of the dialogue. The fact that in some cities small groups of Christians are still permitted to meet for prayer is probably due to the good will towards them developed among the Buddhist population as a result of the dialogue.

THAILAND

In Thailand the prospects for dialogue are good, even if at the moment the situation remains stagnant despite the valiant efforts of some pioneers. Catholic schools, frequented especially by Buddhists, had prepared the terrain and influenced opinion.

Here it was the Buddhists who took the initiative. Already in 1958 a Buddhist university in Bangkok requested the bishop to provide a professor of Christian religion. In the years following the director of the Department of Religions, Col. Pin Matukan, organized annually a day when the religions would meet and present themselves. He also opened a permanent exposition on religions in a hall of the Ministry of Education. Also, the most widely known bonze in the country, Buddhadasa, became interested and so influenced Buddhists positively. The Buddhist patriarch of Thailand visited the Pope in 1972.

Protestants, who generally feel uncomfortable when faced with the question of dialogue and often create obstacles with their rigid positions and methods, have contributed considerably through the annual "Sinclair Thomspon Memorial" conferences held at the theological seminary of Chiang-Mai.

some Catholics have promoted dialogue through their good human, relations, such as Mons. Carretto and especially Fr. Ulliana who has become one of the best known and influential people at the national meetings organized by the department for religions. Collaboration on social questions by groups has also made its contribution. Others, such as Fr. Pezet, have studied the significance of Buddhism by living for long in Buddhist monasteries and practicing meditation in specialized centres. The Thai bishop Mons. Ratna of Chiang-Mai is involved in the dialogue both on the theological and practical level.

At present rapport is good and dialogue is making progress. However, in 1982-1983 a Buddhist movement causing some preoccupation made its appearance denouncing the Catholic Church for a presumed plot to replace Buddhism and Thai culture by the year 2,000. Such accusations of expansionist intent are based on the frequent reports on the Church transmitted by state television, on the elevation of the bishop of Bangkok to the Cardinalate, on the existence of dialogue with Buddhism promoted by the Church and considered only as a tactic for conversion.

SRI LANKA

The situation in Sri Lanka is unique because for centuries it has been the home of four great religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. The national Catholic seminary of Kandy played a part in initiating an openness to Buddhism by offering special courses since 1955. Various specialized centres promoted awareness, encounter and reciprocal collaboration. A few examples: the centre for religion and society run by the Methodist Lynn de Silva which also has a magazine entitled "Dialogue"; the centre run by Fr. Balasuriya O.M.I, with its magazine "Logos"; the centre recently opened by Fr. Peiris S.J. Relations are good throughout. In some areas festivities are celebrated together. Some inter-religious groups collaborate in aiding the handicapped, in development programmes, and in re-settling the Tamil refugees. But here also dialogue is not a living aspect of the church communities and, what is more serious, some of the pioneers in the field feel and at times put themselves on the margin of the institutional Church.

The hierarchy, after years of hesitation, seems to guide the dialogue, In 1982 the bishops organized meetings in the various dioceses aimed at formation towards dialogue. The secretary of the Vatican Secretariate took part in these.

II. SITUATION IN THE FAR EAST: MAHAYANA COUNTRIES

JAPAN

Japan offers experiences in dialogue that are unique. Buddhist initiative is considerable, both at home and internationally. In this industrialized and secularized country religious men seem more driven to meet together in order to verify and confront their own identity and common values. The populace also seem sensitive to a certain type of dialogue as impersonated in people such as John Paul II, Mother Theresa of Calcutta and Chiara Lubich of the Focolarini Movement.

Their visits to Japan in 1981-1982 received national attention. The communications media play a great part in Japan in developing awareness and reciprocal esteem, creating thus the bases for interpersonal and interreligious dialogue. Even if an attitude of dialogue has not yet filtered down to the clergy and laity, and in practice it remains the work of an élite, it is in Japan that dialogue is most developed on different levels.

a) On the "institutional" level: The Commission for Non-Christians is studying the relationship between Catholic faith and traditional ancestor-cult. This is being done also in terms of the inculturation of Christianity in Japan. One might expect more collaboration from the better-known Catholic writers, about ten of them, such as, Endo, Yashiro, Miura, Sono, Inukai, Tanaka, Ohara, Takahashi, Ogawa, Nagao, etc.

b) On the "academic" level: symposiums, seminars, courses and publications on Japanese religions. These take place especially thanks to three institutes for the study of religions:

The Institute fo Oriental Religions at Sophia University (directed by T. Immoos). Various publications.
Nanzan Institute for Religions and Culture at Nanzan University (dir. J. van Bragt). Publication: "Japanese Journal of Religious Studies".
Oriens Institute for Religious Research in Tokyo (dir. R. Renson). Publishes the famous review "Japanese Missionary Bulletin".

c) On the "social" level: collaboration with Non-Christians for social improvement, especially in the two inter-religious organizations created for this scope:

World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) founded by Mr. Nikkyo Niwano, president of Rissho-Koseikai, a new lay Buddhist movement. It is a world-wide inter-religious movement to promote peace and has a good number of Catholic members. The current president is Mons. A. Fernandes, archbishop of Delhi, and in Japan the archbishop of Tokyo, P. Shirayanagi, and Bishop Soma of Nagoya, are active members.

Japan Religious Committee and World Federation, founded by the late Zen master, Sogen

Asahina. Bishop Tanaka of Kyoto and Fr. J. Misue, general secretary of the Episcopal Conference, are members of the steering committee. In collaboration with our Secretariate they organized the Nemi Meeting (1978) and the World Religionists Ethics Congress (WOREC:1981) in Tokyo.

d) On the level of "experience" (sharing): exchange of religious experiences and spirituality.

In this regard two initiatives deserve special mention:

Zen-Christian Colloquium which takes place every year since the famous OISO CONFERENCE of 1967. Christians and Buddhists to live together the contemplative experience of Christianity and Zen. Among those who take part are the well-known Fathers Dumoulin S.J., Johnston S.J., Lassalle S.J., Kadowaki S.J., Okumura O.C.D., Oshikawa O.P., and others.

Spiritual Exchange between East and West: an ambitious project in which on 1979, 50 Japanese Buddhist

monks, scattered in 12 Benedictine Monasteries in Europe, experienced the monastic life of the western Catholic tradition. Next October 20 Benedictines chosen from six European countries will go to Japan on the invitation of Zen Buddhists to experience the life in six Zen monastries.

e) At "grassroots" level: This is no longer just a dialogue between specialists, but dialogue in day to day life. It is the "Dialogue of Life" which is the more important. In this area there is still a long way to go. The only venture showing any success is the annual Interreligious Youths Encounter in which young people of various religions meet to live, pray and discuss together. The idea for this and its subsequent actualization in 1976 are both due to the late Cardinal S. Pignedoli.

KOREA

In Korea the 12 million Buddhists of the country belong to 18 different sects. Contacts and reciprocal attitudes are good and the Buddhist monks are trusting and without complexes. However, the majority of Koreans consider Buddhism to be inadequate as a religion in a modern society and incapable to meet its challenges. Catholics do not seek out dialogue because four-fifths of them are converts and are more interested in deepening their knowledge of their faith than in engaging in dialogue with the former persecutors of Christianity.

CHINA

In continental China Buddhism is re-organizing. Collaboration with other religions takes place on the political level and under the guidance of the Party, and only between those patriotic religious associations approved of and directed by the Party.

TAIWAN

In Taiwan, as in China, Buddhism is one of the many traditional religions and dialogue is consequently multilateral. There are two important institutions: The Association of Official Religions, created through the initiative of Cardinal Yupin, which meets every two months; and the Institute of Spirituality of the Far East in Taipei and under the patronage of the FABC. Here scholars of different religions teach (two years course, with 16 hours per week).

ASIA: CONTINENTAL PLANE

On the Asian Continental plane the FABC has since the beginning a commission for ecumenism and dialogue numbering five members (OEIA) with a permanent secretariate. Two meetings on Christian-Buddhist dialogue have been organized: one at Bangkok in 1974 under the patronage of the Roman Secretariate and the South East Asian Conferences; and one at Sampran in Thailand in 1979 organized by OEIA and called BIRA I. Another event of importance was the meeting of centres of study on Buddhism from which the information review "Inter-Religio" was born. Finally it should be recalled that in almost all countries there is an episcopal commission for dialogue, at times the same commission as that for ecumenism. In these commissions the president is a bishop and the members are drawn from among clergy and specialists. The roles of these commissions vary: animation, study, meetings, proposals for inculturation, etc.

WESTERN COUNTRIES

In recent decades Buddhist presence in the West has become more consistent. The countries where Buddhist influence is greatest are the following (in descending order): USA, England, Germany, France, Italy. Tibetan Tantric and Japanese Zen forms are the strongest. Adherents in the West are mostly middle-class youths. Many more adopt oriental forms of meditation.

Rapport with eastern teachers and religious are more frequent and positive, but with western adherents dialogue is non-existent or more difficult. This is also due to the anti-christianity of many and their hybrid religious-cultural attitudes. Christianity gives little attention to the phenomenon not only of Buddhism, but also of the new religions and sects and to the values being sought after by their adherents or to the consequent questions raised (e.g. meditation).

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FOUR STEPS IN PROMISE KEEPING

People who have integrity are those who:

- 1) *Set goals (make promises) for themselves and their organizations which they believe can be accomplished.*
- 2) *Put all of their energy into doing what they said they would do.*
- 3) *Tell those to whom they have committed as soon as they believe they will not be able to keep their commitment.*
- 4) *Attempt to understand the reason for failure and what corrective action they will need to take in the future.*

The same can be said for organizations, including the local church.

- end -

III. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON BUDDHISM

Marcello Zago. OMI

(This selected bibliography was prepared specially for the Sedos Seminar on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, October 11, 1983).

I. REVIEWS ON BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE: The Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

This Study Centre was originally set up by the Methodist Church in association with the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka. It has concentrated mainly on Buddhist-Christian studies and dialogue. Studies of other religions and ideologies are also included.

BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES: The East-West Religious Project, University of Hawaii. Honolulu - Hawaii, USA.

A scholarly journal published annually since 1981. It presents articles, book-reviews and news items on Buddhism and Christianity and on their inter-relationship based upon historical materials and contemporary experience.

INTER-RELIGIO: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture. 18 Yamazato-cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya 466, Japan.

A Network of Christian Organizations for Interreligious Encounter in Eastern Asia; publishes its newsletter twice annually, in spring and autumn, and will send it free of charge upon request.

II. REVIEWS ON BUDDHISM

BUDDHISTS FOR PEACE: Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace. Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

The ABCP is an international non-governmental organization promoting the links among broad circles in Asia with a view to strengthening the atmosphere of good-neighbourliness, peace and cooperation.

All religions carry the same message, i.e. brotherhood. This is the ground for mutual understanding and respect for each other.

DHARMA WORLD: Buddhist Organisation "Rissho Kosei-Kai", Tokyo, Japan. President: Nikkyo NIWANO.

This monthly bulletin is dedicated to elucidating the problems of peace, the common and urgent concern of all humanity, from the standpoint of religious wisdom and practice; it aspires to contribute to the philosophy of peace, promoting peace activities based on inter-religious cooperation.

(the) MIDDLE WAY: Journal of the Buddhist Society. The Buddhist Society. London, England.

This quarterly journal exists to publish and make known the principles of Buddhism and to encourage the study and application of those principles.

The Society adheres to no one school of Buddhism, and gives the newcomer an impartial introduction to the many branches of Buddhism in Britain today. Founded in 1924, it is the oldest Buddhist Society in Europe.

PARAMITA: Quaderni de Buddhismo. Direttore responsabile: Vincenzo PIGA. Roma, Italia.

"Paramita", la nostra testata, è parola sanscrita, che può tradursi "andare al di là"; Questi quaderni si propongono di redare un contributo alla conoscenza ed alla pratica delle diverse dottrine buddiste: Theravâda, Mahayana e Vajrayana."

SOKA GAKKAI NEWS: Promotion of peace, culture and education through Buddhism. The Soka Gakkai International Office, Tokyo, Japan.

The Bulletin wants to develop the spirit of World Peace, emphasizing Pacifist Spirit of Buddhism. It denounces the arms race, nuclear weapons. It strengthens Human Bonds and Brotherhood, and is working for better human Relations.

TIBETAN BULLETIN: Dharamsala-Temporary Headquarters of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Information Office, Central Tibetan Secretariat. Dharamsala, India.

Tibetan Bulletin, a bimonthly, is the official news organ of the Tibetan administration in exile. It presents news and views and opinions on Tibet, the conditions of the Tibetans in Tibet and the workings of the Tibetan Society in the outside world.

WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF BUDDHISTS REVIEW: The World Fellowship of Buddhists Headquarters. Bangkok, Thailand.

W.F.B. Aims and objects:

- To promote among the members strict observance and practice of the teachings of the Buddha;
- to secure unity, solidarity among Buddhists;
- to propagate the sublime doctrine of the Buddha;
- to organise and carry on activities in the field of social, educational, cultural and other humanitarian services;
- to work for securing peace and harmony among men and to collaborate with other organisations working for the same ends.

III. REVIEWS WITH ARTICLES ON BUDDHISM

BULLETIN: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture. Nagoya, Japan.

This BULLETIN is meant as a link between the Nanzan Institute and all collaborators. It wants to be a mirror of the Institute's aims and activities. It contributes to a better knowledge of Asian Religion and culture, and to a better understanding of East and West and of

Eastern and Western religions, through the generous collaboration of many scholars all over the world.

BULLETIN: Centre for the Study of World Religions - HARVARD UNIVERSITY A
Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

This Bulletin is working for a comparative approach to the study of religions and ethics: Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Religions of China and Africa, Islam. It wants to prepare for and engage in inter-religious colloquy. This Center continues to explore specific ways to make "dialogue" effective.

EAST ASIAN PASTORAL REVIEW: East Asian Pastoral Institute. Manila,
Philippines.

This Review is the voice of the East Asian Pastoral Institute. It is a quarterly review concerned about contemporary issues of theological concern, catechetical import or liturgical interest.

EAPR hopes to contribute in a thought-provoking manner to the maturing process of Christian thought in Asia and the Pacific, and to the growth and inculturation of these churches.

(the) JAPAN MISSIONARY BULLETIN: Oriens Institute for Religious
Research. Tokyo, Japan.

JAPANESE JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES: The Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture. Nagoya, Japan.

This Journal, in quarterly issues, publishes articles and materials that advance *inter-religious understanding* and further the pursuit of knowledge in the study of religion, particularly Japanese religion. One of its functions is to break through the language barriers which separate Japanese scholarship in religion on the international scene.

JAPANESE RELIGIONS: NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions;
(Japan Episcopal Church). Kyoto; Japan.

NUMEN: International Review for the History of Religions. International Association for the History of Religions, (University of Amsterdam). Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Prof. Dr. R. Pettazzoni founded the "International Review for the History of Religions" and baptized it "Numen", a short expressive title and a real "trouvaille". Scholars now consider it an honour to contribute to Numen. Only the best material is selected and the scholarly standard has risen. Numen has in the course of the years published a rich variety of articles on important religio-historical themes.

IV.

 THE FEDERATION OF
 ASIAN BISHOPS CONFERENCES AND DIALOGUE

(The following is an edited account of the talk and comments of Fr. Edward Malone, MM. Secretary to the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences).

The Bishops of the Federation represent three distinct areas, East Asia, South Asia and South East Asia each area itself made up of diverse peoples having immensely varied cultures and histories. The Bishops themselves were thus engaged perforce from the beginning in a demanding process of dialogue.

It is worth noting in passing that Conferences of Bishops are a relatively recent development. The first one being organized in the United States of America only during World War II. It was not until Paul VI's *Ecclesiam suam* that Conferences were referred to in a Papal document.

The Federation of Bishops' Conferences is therefore still in a relatively pioneering period. It has made considerable progress and has already initiated subsidiary organisations of which the Bishops Inter-Religious Affairs (BIRA) is one, while other subsidiary organisations deal with Social Affairs (BISA) and Mission Affairs (BIMA).

B.I.R.A.: The Bishops' Office for Inter-Religious Affairs of the Federation has already organised meetings involving Bishops, religious, priests and laity to study Dialogue with Buddhists and with Hindus. Further meetings with other Religions are in preparation. In these meetings the emphasis is on actual experiences of situations of dialogue but the points of greatest tension always centre around the theology of dialogue.

The Problem: Put briefly and simply the problem is as follows: Is salvation precisely available by way of Buddhism, Hinduism and other Religions? Are Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and others equal partners in view of the Kingdom of God and are all, then, equal on the road to salvation? This is the core of the problem, and the theological answers are not yet fully elaborated. At the human level there may be acceptance of one another, collaboration, cooperation, love for one another but when one enters into the question of the precise meaning of salvation present in all religions there are problems.

If it is true to say that "religion at its deepest level makes us what we are", then dialogue which evades this fundamental fact or tries to get around the consequences is not truly dialogue. There is a real need to-day for a theology of dialogue which takes into consideration the meaning and consequences of Baptism, the identity of the Christian, the identity of the Religious or priest.

An Attitude of Hostility: One reaction to dialogue is simply hostility, an attitude which, in the case of minorities is based on the principle 'primum vivere'. This attitude is opposed to

dialogue even with followers of other Christian Churches, and more so, with members of other religions. This is the context in which dialogue has to take place. There is, without doubt, a great deal of hostility still to it.

Many Buddhists for example, are simply not interested for they have lived together successfully and happily for years. They are afraid of foreigners, of foreign churches and foreign influence, and suspicious of the Christian interest in dialogue at the present time.

We use the word dialogue in different ways depending on our concept of ecclesiology, an "old" ecclesiology or a "new" ecclesiology based on *Lumen Gentium* and the Second Vatican Council.

Again we need to be aware that Asians do not always see Christians as people who are prayerful or deeply moral. The contrary is often true and while they avail of the excellent educational facilities of Christians they are troubled about the effects of this education on their traditional morals.

Life Style: There is a need for continuing formation, study, understanding of cultural differences, realisation of how institutional forms play an essential part in the life of religions.

There is need also to be aware of the importance of one's way of living. In Asia genuine religious leadership is seen as deriving from personal holiness and is accompanied by an increasingly simple manner of living. Mahatma Ghandi's dhoti and the simple dress of sanyassis in India are constant reminders of this attitude. In the West personal holiness is no less important but religious leadership often derives from an appointment or function and progress in leadership is seen to be accompanied by dress and symbols increasingly splendid.

Hope for the Future: The Catholic Church itself is living through the demanding experience of dialogue in its efforts to interpret and implement the findings of the Second Vatican Council. The experience should make us more conscious of the difficulties and demands of dialogue at the wider level. The great religions of Asia are also human and are marred by the failures and degradation which affect all human institutions.

Realisation that the present interest in dialogue in mission is taking place in an atmosphere which is at times un-dialogical and even anti-dialogical should not discourage us but rather spur us on to efforts that are ever more sincere, humble and well-informed.

V. ITEMS FROM THE GENERAL DISCUSSION

Partners in Dialogue: There is danger that the word dialogue will be cheapened by its constant use to-day. The principles of dialogue are not just for relations with other religions. They apply to life. Partners in dialogue are found in the great religions of Asia, in traditional ancestral religions, in the poor, in other christian Churches, religious communities, villages and families. If the principles of dialogue are lacking within one's own community they will certainly be ineffective in the wider context.

Evangelisation and Dialogue: Dialogue does not involve conversion but it does demand assuming new values. It is not so much a question of knowledge but of attitudes. A study in depth of the theology of dialogue is being prepared by the Secretariate for Non-Christians but Fr. Zago pointed out that whatever answers will emerge at that Plenarium it is important to realise that sharing one's religious experience as a Christian is in fact a form of evangelisation.

Contemplation: Meditation and contemplation rather than new forms of activism are essential to the change of attitudes required for dialogue. Respect, listening, discernment of values, love are supremely important at all levels and these are the fruits of an attitude of empathy not sympathy.

"What do you do?": People today and especially young people, seek the truth not just in the abstract, but in response to situations of crisis in the world. Their question is "What do you do?" If they do not get genuine answers to that question they will have little interest in dialogue based on answers to the question "What do you say?" or "What do you believe?"

Buddhism in the West: Buddhism is attracting increasing attention in Europe and North America. There is an urgent need to make contact with Buddhists in these countries and to avail of the opportunities for mutual understanding and enrichment provided by this new presence.

"A Person of Dialogue" is how the missionary of the future will be described and recognised.

A LETTER FROM BANGLADESH

October 31 1983

You may have noticed that I write to you every year around October 31. Why? Because on that date in 1956 I was overwhelmingly attracted to God; I received an unmistakable call to give myself entirely to The Lord. I celebrate that unforgettable date each year by greeting friends.

What are you doing here? That's a question Bengalis continue to ask me even though I've been living for nearly seven years in the same small city in northcentral Bangladesh. I reply: "I try to help people who are sick and poor." Why do that? they ask. I answer: "Because Jesus, my model, did it." My purpose here continues to be simply to live as a Christian among Muslims, showing God's love, especially to the poorest.

I used to think that the surprised reaction of Muslims to this somewhat friendly missionary was due to the novelty of having a foreigner dwelling amongst them. Then, an educated villager instructed me about the lasting effect of colonialism. "We Bengalis think that Englishmen ("Englishmen" is what we call all white foreigners) are primarily interested in women and dancing. In our dramas and plays, Englishmen are portrayed as swallowing women, and as looking down on us Bengalis." He concluded by offering an evaluation: "There are two things you Maryknoll Brothers have done that amaze us. One is that, in your dealings with women, you are absolutely trustworthy. The other is that you treat the poor with respect. I tell you clearly, in these two matters you have succeeded in changing the minds of some of us about foreigners."

Before coming to Bangladesh in 1975, a veteran missionary to this area warned us: Unfortunately, you will not be able to work with women; Muslims will not trust you. I am particularly glad, therefore, about the reputation for trustworthiness in dealing with women.

Progressively it has been dawning on me that my efforts have to do with more than helping and healing the sick. I also invite and inspire trust. How? I ride to far away villages on a bike (i.e., my little charism), offer to help the sick-poor, listen attentively to those who approach me, and stick with the serious patients until their treatment is concluded. People here have apparently never seen this sort of concern before. At first sight, it seems incomprehensible to them. They ask one another: What's in it for him? What's his angle? However, after awhile (i.e. years!) word has gotten around that this foreign chap genuinely cares about suffering people; one doesn't have to bribe him; he won't turn you away; he'll spend time, energy and money (sometimes as much as 40 cents US) to help you find treatment; he expects nothing in return; go ahead and send your child or sister or wife with him because he is like a brother or a maternal uncle to them.

It is literally thrilling for me to win the trust of the poor. Now, many of them invite me into their hut-homes, request me to share their food, bring me along with them to religious festivals, ask me to bless them when they are sick and when they are well, expect me to name their babies, pray for me, and tell me jokes.

They know that I am a Christian and that my Faith is not a threat to theirs. Recently I received some feedback from a middle-class Muslim: "What can be done for this poor country of mine, Brother Bob? There is so much poverty! But you, Brother, have done the only thing that can be done: you are serving the poorest people. If you had tried to work among the middle-class or the rich, they would not have accepted you. But, because you have gone to the poorest, all the people love you, both the rich and the poor. I am speaking from my chest!" It is more than possible that my friend exaggerates. (What else are friends for?) But if there is any truth in what he says, credit must go first to Allah, and then to my Mother and Father. Briefly analysed: I imitate Mom when I feel compassion for folks who are hurt; I imitate Dad when I take the initiative to do something about it. I, too, speak from my heart when I thank Mom and Dad for living for us (their children four) so that we might live for others. By the way, this is their anniversary, too: Golden Wedding.

What are you doing there? Are you celebrating any anniversaries?

With thanks to Allah for your friendship, your brother,

Bob McCahill, NM.

Postscript for fellow-pilgrims. It's a Friday as I write this letter, the day on which many of the village poor stream into town, moving from door to door to ask for a bit of rice-grain to take home. These good people do not take meals for granted.

I don't mean to sound grim, but these are persons who have nothing more to lose of material wealth. Yet, they smile, in return for yours. They can laugh and sing, not because they feel physically secure, but in spite of insecurity. They simply must, and therefore do, trust mightily in Allah. That trust gives them another sort of security, Who is Indestructible.

There is nothing romantic about poverty. When I observe that the poor have saving graces it is not in order to glorify destitution. Rather, it to say that Allah can do surprisingly beautiful things in the hearts of people who suffer.

The poor do not realize how impressive they are to me as they carry on under frightening, depressing conditions. They edify me by being cheerful when I would be anxious. It would be a mistake to imagine that this Catholic-Christian missionary-priest is not immensely enriched by his contact with faithful Muslims. I see Allah at work in them.

There is nothing that I would accept in trade for this way of life. I wish you, for a lifetime, the same sort of joy I experience while living with and for the poor. Let's keep reminding one another that God cannot be outdone in generosity. Therefore, the truly wise ones will give themselves to others radically...in that way to experience deeper joy in their own lives, now, a hundred fold.

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