Refereed Articles

Eight Dispositional Postures For Religious Dialoguing:
The Positive Enactment of Prescriptive and Proscriptive Cooperation

Anton Karl Kozlovic
The Flinders University of South Australia

Formal religious dialogue is an honourable enterprise with a long and distinguished history. However, the cultivation of attitudinal prescriptions and proscriptions for official dialoguers has been scantily researched. The literature was reviewed, and eight dispositional postures were identified and explicated herein, namely: (a) agreeing to disagree; (b) non-aggression, non-confrontation; (c) truthfulness and fairness; (d) honesty, sincerity, trust, respect, integrity and love; (e) mutual cooperation; (f) critical but nonevaluative reflections; (g) tolerance of faith proclaiming statements; and (h) an expectation of change, mutual transformation and risk-taking. It was concluded that a thoughtful application of these eight postures would greatly improve the quality and effectiveness of future dialogue praxis.

Religious dialogue, whether interreligious, intrareligious or interideological, is "an established form of cross-cultural communication" (Dunbar, 1998:461) that is worthy of more detailed communicological scrutiny. Although there are many forms, levels, types and descriptions of dialogue, this review will be limited to formal, official dialogue between representatives of differing religions. As such, the enterprise can be viewed as an organisationally-structured communications event which needs established ground rules, such as: "Begin the first meeting with a discussion of the Dialogue Decalogue...to establish guidelines for meaningful and sensitive dialogue" (Sigal, 1993:110). It is argued that in addition to Leonard Swidler's (1982) Dialogue Decalogue, application of the following eight, non-mutually exclusive, dispositional postures will greatly enhance the dialogic process and engineer many other desirable interpersonal outcomes.

Posture #1: Agreeing to Disagree

Communication begins with the sender: the person who reacts to situations from a unique vantage point, interpreting ideas and filtering experiences through their own perception. Unique to that person and integral to all the communication they engage in is a background of accumulated attitudes, experiences, skills, cultural conditioning and individual differences that influence how that individual communicates (Dwyer, 1993:9).

This means that participants will need to acknowledge that differences of opinion, value and belief will, and inevitably must occur during the dialogue, after all, this is why different religions already exist. Indeed, "interreligious dialogue presupposes religious commitments" (Dunbar, 1998:355) and their competing claims of veracity. For example, there "can be no question that to be a Christian and to take the Christian religious tradition to be formally valid are one and the same thing. Not only Christianity but every religion claims implicitly or explicitly to be formally valid" (Ogden, 1994:7). Not only will differences exist but each religion will attempt to apply its own criteria to the Other, which needs to be judiciously controlled. Why? Because:

> ... no religion can completely forego applying its own specific (Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist) criteria of truth to the other religions...Dialogue does not mean self-repudiation...Should all participants absolutely insist on their own criteria of truth, genuine dialogue is nipped in the bud (Kung, 1988:239).

This view is in sympathy with Paul Mojzes's (1978:11) 21st dialogue ground rule, namely: "Dialogue is impossible if either partner claims to have already solved the problem for all time to come." In his 18th ground rule, Mojzes (1978:11) acknowledged these differences and advised participants to "Face issues which cause conflict, but emphasize those things upon which partners agree. Antagonistic relationships may then give way to cooperation."

This agreeable posture succeeded admirably in the 1986 Catholic-Marxist Dialogue in Budapest, Hungary:

> The dialogue of the sixties...had shown the futility of trying to reconcile the Christian and Marxist world-views. The participants agreed to respect the differences between their worldviews and searched rather for common values as a basis for coexistence and cooperation (Pereira, 1987:265).

This stance required participants to temporarily suspend their disbelief, as (obliquely) recommended by the Christian, M. Thomas Thangaraj (1991:167):

> While it is true that a Christian theologian cannot at any given moment suspend all Christian perspectives and look at a theological issue in a vacuum, it is possible, in a dialogue setting, to relativize one's particular standpoint for a time and work toward a more inclusive understanding of the issue at hand.

This agreeing-to-disagree rule implies a lack of compulsion to force the Other to accept (or reject) particular viewpoints.

It is the dialogic equivalent of the Qur'anic command: "There is no compulsion in religion" (Sura 2:256), and of accepting that fact and leaving it to Allah to sort out accordingly. "So if they believe in the like of that which you believe, then they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, then they are only in opposition. So Allah will suffice for you against them" (Sura 2:137). This stance also refocusses the dialoguer's energy away from debating/advocacy to the sympathetic, fair and accurate understanding of the Other, as embodied in Paul Mojzes's (1978:11) 11th ground rule: "Listen to what your partner is saying. Strive for a clearer understanding of his or her position. Be willing continually to revise your understanding of the other's views."

If there is no perceived competition to **win** then there is no need to **try** and win, but if there is a need to **understand** the Other, then the desire for one-sided advocacy diminishes commensurately. Consequently, Wilfred Cantwell Smith's (1981:193) old comment regarding the label "dialogue" are worth re-examining:

> ...'dialogue', a concept that is in many ways a highly significant improvement [on monologue] but that I personally find on many scores inadequate. I would urge something less occasional, and less polarised. At best dialogue designates a transition through which one moves to something new...As a term I prefer 'colloquy'; partly for its multilateral connotations but chiefly to suggest a side-by-side confronting of the world's problems (intellectual and other) rather than a face-to-face confronting of each other.

It is similar to watching a movie together and discussing it afterwards. Interestingly, this collaborative arrangement was prefigured by Smith (1973:55) decades ago:

> Even a face-to-face dialogue gives way to a side-by-side conversation, where scholars of different faiths no longer confront each other but collaborate in jointly confronting the universe, and consider together the problems in which all of them are involved.

This side-by-side arrangement implies togetherness whereas face-to-face dialogue implies confrontation that surreptitiously defeats the goals of cooperation. Adopting a cooperative side-by-side approach is the interreligious dialogue equivalent of Peter Rengel's (1987) 66th inspiration entitled *On The Same Side*:

> When you and your Lover disagree, The important thing is You both feel you are On the same side, Facing the issue. Stay beside each other, Looking out at the conflict Together, Rather than putting it Between you. This feeling of togetherness is Much more precious Than any problem You will ever solve (npn) [my formatting].

Once a religion's need to "force" acceptance (as opposed to correct understanding) of the Other's belief is removed, the real business of understanding, mutual exchange and growth can occur. This was demonstrated by Sarah Cunningham's (1987:16) Women of Faith group:

So, we are gathered as an interreligious group, first of all to claim who we are. We have no desire to be converted, syncretized, or amalgamated into anything else. But we are also here to testify to the differences between knowing and claiming our story on the one hand, and being a slave to its limitations on the other. We refuse to restrict God to our own particulars.

From the insider's point of view, this approach alleviates the fear of failure, self-doubt, and chastisement resulting from unsuccessfully convincing Others of the truths of one's own religious convictions. Also, the resultant anger because the Other did not responding "correctly" can be likewise avoided.

This agreeing-to-disagree requirement was also embodied in Paul Mojzes's (1978:11) 24th ground rule: "You must not try to convert your partner, or the dialogue may turn again into a monologue. Differences must be maintained, although they should change from irreconcilable ones to a diversity of approaches for the common good." Just as importantly, this means that participants should not come to official dialogues with firmly set assumptions about the Other:

Rather, each partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy, but also attempt to agree with the dialogue partner as far as is possible while still maintaining integrity with his own tradition; where he absolutely can agree no further without violating his own integrity, precisely there is the real point of disagreement — which most often turns out to be different from the point of disagreement that was falsely assumed ahead of time (Swidler, 1982:11).

This advice being Swidler's equivalent of Mojzes's (1978:10) 7th ground rule: "Do not stereotype. Be open to the presentation of your partner's viewpoint."

Posture #2: Non-Aggression, Non-Confrontation

As Jean-Claude Basset (1992:37) stated in his 6th dialogue rule: "You shall not hurt the life or the faith of others by your violence, your disdain, or your ignorance." This is obvious but sometimes forgotten, nor should it be confused with vigorous presentations of the faith's facts. Especially if, like Peter Ochs (1993:123), one does:

...not assume that the parties must bring to the dialogue benevolent feelings toward each other; ethical emotivism (or the attempt to adopt what one believes to be morally correct feelings) may in fact interfere with the dialogue by prejudging its conditions and results.

Despite a potential lack of benevolent feelings, neither side should be assaulted during events, whether physically, psychologically or doctrinally. Why? Because,

overlooking etiquette, consideration and respect issues for the moment, it is simply bad communications practice. "To pass judgment by telling the person their reaction is stupid or that you know the answer, denigrating their point of view or laughing at the circumstances, simply creates a barrier" (Dwyer, 1993:14). This advice is the dialogue equivalent of understanding the psychological difference between unacceptable aggressive behaviour and acceptable assertive behaviour. After all, how can one sympathetically understand the Other if being attacked in the process?

Nor should the Other's position be cynically or sarcastically degraded, as embodied in Mojzes's (1978:10) 8th ground rule: "Interpret your partner's view in its best light. Look at the whole picture and do not try to belittle that view." This view was also embodied in Hendrik J. C. Pieterse's (1990:225) third criterion for an acceptable communications practice, namely: "there should be unconditional acceptance of others as individuals entitled to an authentic existence. It follows that the other party has to be protected from humiliation and threat." Any uncontrolled transgressions can seriously impair the dialogue for years simply because participants have the faculty of remembering. As Eric J. Sharpe (1992:232) colourfully illustrated:

> In some situations, the one whom we should like to see as a partner in dialogue is like next-door's ginger tomcat at home in Sydney: whenever he sees me, he disappears over the fence. These days, my intentions toward him are entirely peaceful. But he remembers! Similarly with not a few human communities up and down the world. They look at the Christian world and hear the fine words. And then they remember a few of the less accommodating things that have been said in the past, and a few of the less than charitable things that have been done.

Such memory problems are not surprising given Christianity's long and sordid history, particularly during the Crusades, the Inquisition and the Holocaust. As Rabbi Leon Klenicki (1991:4) painfully noted:

> We Jews must surmount two thousand years of memories that haunt us with images of the past, many of them referred to as legends by our parents, the memory of memories. We must overcome the memory of Constantine, of the church fathers' contempt for our tradition, of medieval confrontations, of the ghettos. We must overcome the polite antisemitism of the nineteenth century, the silence that surrounded the Holocaust, the ideological indifference for Israel's struggle for survival. We must overcome also the temptation of self-righteousness! Both Jews and Christians must rid themselves of triumphalism.

The problem of dialogic memory also worried the Muslim Syed Ausaf Ali (1989:25):

> If people from the Western world are more interested in interfaith dialogue than people from Asian and African countries, it is because the former have no fear of religious, cultural or political domination, whereas the latter, with bitter memories lingering, still have some fears...we find the Arabs are not as

enthusiastic about engaging in interfaith dialogue as people from Western countries because of the memory of the long period of the Crusades and recollection of domination by the Western powers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Not surprisingly, it "does require vision and courage not to allow the past to dominate the present and the future" (Fitzgerald, 1994:70). Sharpe's (1992), Klenicki's (1991) and Ali's (1989) comments also emphasise a frequently forgotten fact - human communication is irreversible:

> Messages are interpreted as they are received. Once perceived, messages cannot be taken back. Most of us have said something we wish we could take back— the fact is no one can. Once a message is shared, it becomes part of the receiver's experience and influences subsequent messages during the transaction. People sometimes forget this principle and try to forget the message was ever sent (Yoder *et al.*, 1993:17).

The practical lesson here is not to fall into the trap of making less-than-accommodating, less-than-charitable remarks in the first place. If they **must** be raised, then only at propitious moments, possibly with a bonding prayer. Such as that used at the 1993 New Delhi Declaration of the Inter Religious Federation for World Peace Congress: "we call for the healing of memories that can arise as we collectively ask forgiveness for wrongs of the past so that we may together move toward a more promising future" (Beversluis, 1993:125-126).

Posture #3: Truthfulness and Fairness

Each participant should be truthful and fair towards the Other whether the issue is: (a) **administrative** (e.g., turning up on time); (b) **academic** (e.g., using correct logic); (c) **doctrinal** (e.g., using Scriptures correctly and respectfully); (d) **procedural** (e.g., not dominating the session); or (e) **dialogic** (e.g., not reacting to stereotypes, whether the abstract universals of pluralist philosophies or the caricatures of popular prejudices). In short, "Treat each person as you would want to be treated - an old rule but a badly neglected one" (DeVito, 1985:102). There are also good practical needs to be truthful and fair, for "if we are not ready to lower our defences, if in fact we are more interested in scoring points than in knowing one another, we may as well give up dialogue altogether" (Taylor, 1980:229). This rule is the very heart of dialoguing and must be vigorously enforced, maintained and protected. Not only must truth be told but:

> Truth must be told about different religions even-handedly, if possible in terms acceptable to each particular religion. There can be no dialogue unless there is mutual understanding and mutual trust. To tell the truth is to allow each person to speak without fear or embarrassment (Brown, 1984:113).

This requirement being an embodiment of Jean-Claude Basset's (1992:38) 9th dialogue rule, namely: "You shall not give false evidences against your neighbour by denigrating his or her faith and practices." Why? Because:

> Interreligious dialogue is possible only as people quietly and realistically describe their religious experience, giving their reasons for the faith that is in them, while at the same time seeking to understand and appreciate religious experience from other points of view (Mollenkott, 1987:63).

If the criteria of fairness and truthfulness are not valued then the whole dialogue enterprise is in jeopardy. So what can be done about it?

Apart from encouraging dialoguers to vie with each other in extolling virtues, event organisers can help by behaving in the following five prescribed ways. Firstly, give each side equal time to have their say (whether specifically or overall). Secondly, allow each side to have their full say (tempered by time and session limits). Thirdly, allow the correction of any misunderstandings (there is nothing constructive by dialoguing in error). Fourthly, encourage the avoidance of stereotypes because "in dialogue, partners should be free to "define themselves" and not be defined by the images or stereotypes of others" (Brockway and Rajashekar, 1987:177), or as Ans Joachim van der Bent (1978) illustrated:

> Can communists so sweepingly be accused of arrogance, dishonesty, injustice, stupidity, and tyranny, all resulting from their adherence to the doctrines of dialectical and historical materialism? Are Christians free from arrogance, dishonesty, injustice, stupidity, and tyranny as long as they defend the superiority of religious idealism over materialism? (159-160).

One would have to say a firm 'No!" Fifthly, allow constructive, critical evaluations to be equally applied to all participants:

> Too often there have been both a lack of sober analysis and an absence of self-criticism. The church has sometimes tended to use two types of analysis. It has used very idealistic concepts when describing its own teachings, goals, and institutions. It has used quite a different method when speaking of Marxism [for example]; here it has stressed empirically-observable negative facts and short-comings (Aarhus Workshop, 1987:77).

This fairness criterion also applies to the event organisers themselves, in which case the following Christian-inspired business advice is appropriate:

> Don't use "Christian" manipulation. Because many staff members are highly motivated to be workers in God's kingdom, we may be tempted to use this motivation inappropriately. Because they are doing the "Lord's work" does not give us license to take advantage of the individual's personal time. We must be careful not to expect our staff to work consistent unpaid overtime, nor accept all our pronouncements as divinely inspired (Engstrom and Dayton, 1984:13).

There are numerous Scriptural precedents for convincing participants of the importance of this fairness requirement. For example, Christians can naturally call upon the *Bible*: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise (Luke 6:31 KJV). Hindus can call upon the *Mahabharata*: "Let not any man do unto another any act that he wisheth not done to himself by others, knowing it to be painful to himself" (Shanti prava, cclx.21). Muslims can resort to the *Hadith*: "No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself" (Muslim, imam 71-2). Buddhists have the *Udanavarga*: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself" (v.18), while Confucians have the *Analects*: "Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you" (Book XII, #2), alternatively: "What you yourself do not wish, do not do to others" (*Conversations* 15, 23). All of these statements are sacred variants of the Golden Rule.

Posture #4: Honesty, Sincerity, Trust, Respect, Integrity and Love

This postural cluster of positive attitudes encompasses the "do the right thing" sentiment, variously labelled and packaged. For example, it may be an obvious point, but each participant is expected not to deliberately lie, misrepresent, or distort the Other's view. Absolute honesty is required simply because dialoguing is not "a trick, a stratagem to get to the other, to defeat the partner" (Panikkar, 1988:148). There should be "no hidden agendas. There should be no tactical or selfish motive initiating the dialogue" (Mojzes, 1978:11). Instead, there "must be real mutual trust, which is possible only when all the cards are on the table" (Panikkar, 1975:408). Why? Because dialogue "can only take place in a long-term relationship of absolute mutual trust" (Pieterse, 1990:235), and "if mistrust is allowed to get the upper hand there can be no progress. So one of the preliminary stages in dialogue will be to build up trust" (Fitzgerald, 1994:69).

Building mutual trust is difficult and probably why many dialoguers comment about the risks involved. As Peter Rengel (1987:npn) poetically put it in *Trusting*, his 94th inspiration: "Trusting means Letting go Of control. Trusting means Allowing Others to move In any Direction. Trusting means Dropping Your cherished Beliefs. Trusting means Sensing When to surrender To the Mystery Beyond yourself" [my formatting].

Although not always easy to do, it is essential for interreligious discussion, and entails "allowing the standpoint of one's partner in dialogue the same validity one gives to oneself" (Breslauer, 1984:19). Nor should there be any false fronts or attempts to avoid putting all the cards on the dialogue table because approaching "another religion with a hidden agenda can produce only limited results, often more negative than positive" (Swearer, 1977:22). If any attempt is made to misrepresent or conceal things, or if there should be a failure to trust or listen to what the dialogue partner is saying, then nothing constructive can be achieved.

This attitude of openness should be actively encouraged because not "only will the absence of sincerity prevent true dialogue from happening, so also will the absence of the assumption of the partner's sincerity. In brief: no trust, no dialogue" (Swidler, 1982:10). Indeed, in "a climate of fear, mistrust, or misrepresentation, partners in dialogue should be aware of the need for complete honesty if the ground is to be prepared for fruitful dialogue" (Brockway and Rajashekar, 1987:177). Along with trust and sincerity comes "respect for the other in his or her "otherness"" (Gordis, 1991:468), and where "peaceful, mutual respect is regarded as the first basic condition for any communication, and if practiced the possibility for successful interreligious dialogue is guaranteed" (Fung, 1989:46). This first basic condition was advocated by D. C. Mulder (1989:207) and embodied in Jean-Claude Basset's (1992:38) eighth rule, namely: "dialogue requires the respect for other people's goods, whether in the form of cultural and spiritual heritage or in the areas of freedom and material goods necessary for the expression of one's convictions."

The need for respect was also an important element in Jean-Claude Basset's (1992:37) fifth dialogue rule: "Even one who converts to another religion is not exempt from respect for the tradition that has been abandoned. This is especially important for the manner in which Christian faith relates to Judaism." Fortunately, respect can be easily developed:

> It has been repeatedly said that no one participating in the organizations is expected to compromise their own faith commitment — the only requirement is that a person should show the same respect to the faiths of other people as he or she would hope that others would show to his or her religion (Braybrooke, 1993a:106).

This advice was another application of the Golden Rule. For proselytising faiths with overt missionary intentions (e.g., Mormons), this respect requirement can be recast in a suitable form, such as: "True witness proceeds from the richness of Christ, not fear of human truth" (Failletaz, 1982:3). But whatever its form, respect is an essential prerequisite for any dialogue because it engenders trust which greatly enhances the flow of communication. Indeed, "trust, an attitude of spiritual acceptance of the other, is not only required but, in the last analysis, constitutes the liberating truth, the spiritual value, of such encounters" (Dean, 1988:168). Such an essential prerequisite was also acknowledged by Martin Buber in his fourth criterion for authentic dialogue:

> Genuine dialogue requires the overcoming of appearance. If the thought of one's effect as a speaker outweighs the thought of what one has to say, then one inevitably and irreparably deforms what one has to say: it enters deformed into the conversation, and the conversation itself is deformed (quoted in Shapiro, 1989:33).

Given the obvious religious nature of dialoguing, it is not surprising to see

repeated references to love within the literature.

The call to love uniquely separates religious dialoguing from all other forms of business communication. At the risk of being repetitious, it is worth reproducing some of these calls for the purpose of emphasis and insight, namely:

> Love touches on deeper levels than truth. Love means the whole man, while truth is often narrowed to an intellectual connotation. In the wider context of love, on an existential level, the deeper aspects of truth which surpasses the merely intellectual will not be eliminated. Their truth becomes a reality to be felt and responded to... (Samartha, 1981:39).

> ...genuine dialogue requires the disposition of love. We need to impute integrity to those representing the other traditions. To do so is a genuine gesture of love. It is also the first step toward building a relationship, which can lead to developing a community of respect and understanding. Love leads to a genuine enjoyment of sharing and elicits the hope of affirming some degree of unity. It sparks the desire to see the other partners in the discussion become edified (Peters, 1986:885).

> Genuine love is mutually transforming. Dialogue thus involves the risk of one partner being changed by the other. The desire for false security in ghetto communities or for continuing in one-way patterns of mission betrays both fear and arrogance and therefore the absence of love (van der Bent, 1988:33).

> Interreligious dialogue is not a merely theoretical synthesis of theological doctrines that leaves the human heart and will out of account...if one cannot emotionally and volitionally as well as intellectually experience both religions, then one has not understood them (Krieger, 1993:352-353).

> ...interreligious dialogue should bring out the culture of love...a culture of love which is [a] fundamental force in every religion should be reaffirmed in the context of interreligious dialogue (Mathias, 1994:11).

This love requirement was put more poetically by Peter Rengel (1987:npn) in his 12th inspiration entitled *Communication*: "Words spoken from the head Only perpetuate The mind/thought process. Words spoken from the Heart Lead into direct experience Of your own inner Silence From which your Truth emerges" [my formatting]. Indeed, for Christians who use Jesus as their standard of behaviour, love is an unavoidable *modus operandi* and so must logically lead to dialogue because:

> He told us to love everybody, and he showed that he respected and appreciated the faith of non-Jews, as he did that of the Roman soldier (cf. Matthew 8:5-13) and the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28). The predominant elements in the relationships of Jesus with others are respect, listening, encouragement, and

dialogue (Zago, 2000:13).

So, who in an interreligious event could legitimately object to truth lovingly given and shared?

For other sacred text-based exhortations to love, one need only refer to the biblical command: "thou shalt love thy neighbour" (Lev. 19:18 KJV) and its equivalents in the Pseudoepigrapha: "Love the Lord and the neighbor" (*Testament of Issachar* 5:2), "Love the Lord in your whole life and one another with a sincere heart" (*Testament of Daniel* 5:3), "Fear the Lord and love the neighbor" (*Testament of Benjamin* 3:3), "everyone love his/her neighbor" (*Jubiles* 20:9), and "Love one another my sons as brothers, as one loves oneself...You should love one another as yourselves" (*Jubiles* 36:4-6). There is no escaping this love requirement! Interestingly, Winifred Wing Han Lamb (1994:7) offered a new theoretical model for interfaith dialogue based on intellectual eros, that is:

> ...the will and desire to understand, not in the sense primarily of wanting to subject claims to the criteria of public objectivity, but rather, the desire to broaden understanding. The lover of truth enters into the dialogue between positions and sees each as genuinely viable. This prevents her [or him] trivialising any position as a partisan would do...For the religious believer who loves truth, inter-faith conversations is necessary for the fulfilment of the love of truth.

As James L. Fredericks (1998:167) also reminded one: "We cannot love and remain unchanged." Interestingly, for those wishing to bypass love and revert to a value-free objectivist argument, Scott Daniel Dunbar's (1998:461) logical retort is highly pertinent: "scholars who insist that the academic study of religion ought to be value-free on the grounds that scholarship should remain impartial are contradicting themselves because their *own* statement is prescriptive."

One good to way to achieve laudable goals is to develop interreligious friendships. In fact, "Showing weakness or admitting confusion is rare in interreligious dialogues, especially at the official level. Within the embrace of friendship, however, the mutual pursuit of truth becomes a more concrete possibility" (Fredericks, 1998:169). Signs of this friendship stance within intrareligious dialogues is evident when "Catholics no longer speak of 'separated brethren' but of fellow Christians" (Brunett, 1999:302).

Posture #5: Mutual Cooperation

Ideally, dialogue sessions should be characterised as mutual problem-solving activities, that is, a process of exploring, highlighting and sharing areas of mutual understanding (and ignorance). The "conversants should be genuinely disposed to listen sympathetically to the position being advanced by the representatives of the other religious traditions. We must, in principle, be open to the possibility that there is validity in what our rivals claim" (Peters, 1986:885). Indeed, it should be formally

recognised that there is always some validity in the claims of Others, which would be churlish to deny. As Franz Rosenzweig impressively argued, to believe in my God entails that I must also believe in your God because:

> ...self-affirmation entailed the affirmation of the other, for my 'personal' God who is also the **one** God is the God of all creation. The identification of "my" God with the "One" God presupposed and required the identification of the "One" God with the personal God of my neighbor. In saying "yes" to myself, I must also say "yes" to my neighbor (quoted in Spiegler, 1989:432).

This mutual problem-solving activity should not be characterised as a win-lose stratagem, but rather, as a win-win stratagem similar to the Yeshiva practice of debating Talmudic theological points; as lovingly portrayed in *Yentl* (1983, dir. Barbara Streisand). If the debater's opponent forgot a defence he could have made, it is pointed out by his "rival," the opponent then makes it and the debate continues; all in a spirit of good will and mutual development. Thus, the difficulty is not the individuals' problem but their **joint** problem to be solved cooperatively. The eminent Catholic theologian Hans Kung (1988:250) made a similar point:

> ...with them [other religions] we are in a process of communication, and the longer it lasts, the deeper it becomes. In this process one should not dispute about what is mine or yours, my truth, your truth, but one should much more be utterly open to learning, to taking up the truth of the others, and without jealousy sharing one's truth.

What a better practical demonstration of cooperation (and love) between dialoguers can there be?

As Paul Mojzes (1978:11) noted in his 25th ground rule: "Dialogue should enable easier cooperation." It is here that the affective skills of bracketing (epoche), empathetic listening and imaginative identification (eidetic vision) could be usefully applied (Moore and Habel, 1982). Interestingly, Jeanne Audry Powers (1987:5-6) argued that dialoguing exclusively amongst women could result in something special:

> ...each participant knows what it means for women to be silenced or rendered insignificant in her own tradition, a special kind of hearing and openness in listening takes place. Sensitivity toward differing positions is crucial in dialogue, and the common experiences of women that run through all of the traditions make dialogue uniquely possible for women.

Sarah Cunningham (1987:12-13) noted the same effect: "When we come together, we find common bonds among ourselves as women of faith. In the commonality of what we have been denied in each of our separate traditions, we find a strange kind of unity." Indeed, Maura O'Neill (1990:93) argued that it was "essential for women's interreligious dialogue" to overcome androcentrism with its male communication biases. Temporarily overlooking the potential sexism involved, these

claims have merit in the short-term because they evoke the concept of niche marketing. However, this same-sex strategy can only be a first step, eventually the circle has to be expanded to include all Others with whom one needs to discuss important things, whether gender-based or not.

To ensure stronger cooperation between like-minded, similarly experienced persons, this niche marketing concept could be extended to include dialogue between diverse sub-groupings. For example: (a) missionaries with no less than ten years field experience; (b) academic members of the faith only; (c) lay members of the faith only; (d) missionaries who have worked in one particular region of the world (e.g., Africa); (e) or within a particular state (e.g., Natal); or (f) "within an ethnic group, for example between Korean Catholics and Buddhists or Native American Catholics and traditionalists for cultural and other benefits of the entire group and their larger constituencies" (Borelli, 1990:3). Even understanding a religion *per se* is sometimes better done along ethnic lines, for example, the "religious beliefs of Native Americans are best expressed in terms of the individual ethnic groups, such as, Ojibway, Hopi, and Lakota" (Grim, 1990:5).

The range, nature and extent of the selections would reflect the organisational divisions to be found within the religion, the wider community, and the objects of such zeal, while also incorporating the notion of a range-of-forums for dialoguers (Baldock, 1994:27). However, to avoid potential clique problems (e.g., women-only groups), such niche-marketed events would eventually need to broaden its membership to include everyone else, theoretically speaking. At best, niche dialogues are transitory, intermediate stages that should be considered as positive first steps down the bumpy road of dialogue. One should be wary, however, of producing the proverbial female, male-chauvinist-pigs and their various interreligious equivalents.

Posture #6: Critical But Nonevaluative Reflections

Since the exchange of information is at the heart of dialogue, errors, discrepancies and biases must inevitably occur due to a variety of unavoidable distortions; particularly one's preconceived notions about the Other. However, this "is not to say that one should not bring to dialogue clear positions and prejudgments; not only are such prejudgments unavoidable, they are necessary for effective exchange" (Knitter, 1982:207). Why? Because a "Lack of criticism is not an element of the dialogical approach to any theme" (Romic, 1978:115). Indeed, dialogue participants **should** "respond critically, and even suspiciously when necessary" (Tracy, 1990:4) because nothing "significant emerges out of dialogue unless we have been seriously tested, challenged, and enticed by the faith stance of our partners in dialogue" (Swearer, 1977:40).

Participants should acknowledge this point early on in the dialogue process, preferably during the agree-to-disagree phase. Participants should also be critical of all statements, and to examine them logically, rationally and fairly (i.e., the academic

response) while at the same time trying to be fair, compassionate and sympathetic (i.e., the cooperative response), even if one believes that benevolent feelings are not always necessary for dialogue (Ochs, 1993:123). Nor should this requirement be confused with weak critical reflection. Consideration and cooperation is not academic dilution.

Conversely, gross evaluative statements (as opposed to faith proclaiming statements) such as: 'That's the Devil's work!' 'Blasphemer!' 'Heretic!' from a Christian against a non-Christian for example, should be avoided for the sake of harmony, even if the Christian sincerely believes this. Why? Because an official dialogue event is **not** the best time nor place for it. In psychological counselling terms, it is inappropriate self-disclosure. In fact, such participants should not be officially dialoguing, it being indicative of either: (a) a failure of the faith to prescreen its selected representatives; (b) the organiser's failure in not informing the faith of the unacceptability of this type of anti-dialogue behaviour; or most worryingly of all, it is (c) deliberate, intentional behaviour for unsavoury political reasons. As such, controls need to be instituted to safeguard the future of the dialogue enterprise. This was essentially Eric J. Sharpe's (1977:148-9) point:

> Each [religion] will approach the mystery from a different angle, but what they must not do is to claim that theirs is the only possible approach: only as they share insights and bring their methods together to bear on central questions will they find the way forward, beyond the narrow limits which each separately would impose. The dialogue, then, continues.

Not only does the dialogue continue, but it means that the conclusions reached need not be uniform, as encapsulated in Paul Mojzes's (1978:11) 27th ground rule:

> Observe the dialectical nature of the dialogue. Both views should be included in final conclusions, though not necessarily in equal measure. Both partners ought to move to new positions (not necessarily convergent ones) which would not have been possible without the dialogue.

This phase of the dialogic process can also incorporate James Kodera's (1989:160) plea that interfaith dialogue go beyond the level of verbal discourse to include contemplation because:

> Contemplation restores the sanctity of silence to the verbal discourse that theology is. Contemplation, when shared empirically, resolves differences without postulating yet another set of opposites. Contemplation frees us, frees future interfaith dialogues from the tyranny of cogitation.

It was a view in sympathy with Peter Rengel's (1987) 78th inspiration entitled *Sameness*:

> The outer mind creates labels Like "Jewish" or "Christian" or "Hindu," Making our Paths appear to be different. But we're all travelling up the same mountain.

We each have the same Inner Realizations As we discover Love's Unfolding. If we stop listening to these labels And start listening to our Hearts, Then we can join as One In celebrating our Humanness (npn) [my formatting].

Delightful as Rengel's inspiration is, this "does not mean that we must not talk at all...The ineffable spirit, too, must be articulated for it to enter into human consciousness" (Kodera, 1989:160-161).

In practice, dialoguing should include reflective periods to incorporate the results of such contemplation during this critical-but-nonevaluative phase. However, one must also be aware of a potential trap associated with the power of silence. As Hawkins and Hudson (npd:95) explained using a business example:

Many negotiators find silence difficult to withstand. Silence used appropriately can make people feel anxious...It causes embarrassment, and people feel compelled to fill the "gap". Silence may be used to prompt questioner to answer own question. Beware of falling into the trap of answering your own question due to your opponent's silence.

Indeed, Myers and Myers (1992:202-204) offered eleven types of silence, each with their own shade of meaning and different consequences for interpersonal communication. Being aware of this potential problem can ameliorate negative effects, after all, anxiety should **not** be a permanent feature of dialoguing.

Surprisingly, not many participants have considered the possibility of formally evaluating the dialogue, as an administrative housekeeping duty. This was suggested by the Permanent Council of the French Bishops concerning the Christian-Marxist dialogue: "It is important to define the projects clearly, to draw up a plan of action, and to evaluate the completed works" (Murphy, 1978:150). The need for evaluation can also be extracted from a strained reading of Udo Bermbach's (1978:98) list of possible expectations from dialogue partners:

For a new dialogue to be fruitful, it is imperative that both sides openly clarify their present positions, in order that negative experiences on both sides not become crystallized as basic propositions for negotiations. Both sides must embark on such a dialogue with the firm intention to correct each other and to learn from each other.

However, this lack is understandable considering Alexander Brunett's (1999:305) observation that "more ecumenical formation is needed if we are to assume the responsibility for ecumenical evaluation. None of our Churches has perfected ecumenical decision-making," let alone its interreligious, interideological equivalents. Plans of action, clarifying positions and avoiding the crystallisation of errors is certainly worth the effort, and should be mandatory in the future. Likewise, summing the results of each dialogue on a regular basis is useful. This was done in one Roman Catholic-Classical Pentecostal dialogue: "At the end of each dialogue week there would be an "agreed account" and a press release prepared summarizing the

discussions" (Sandidge, 1992:240). It was a good idea. If nothing else, it demonstrated practical results to the public and communicologically implied new directions because:

> What people have already said or heard determines what will follow. Thus, the coding, decoding, and interpretation of messages by communicating parties usually builds on or is an extension of prior message content. All parties simultaneously take this prior message content into account as the exchange continues (DeFleur *et al.*, 1993:23).

Posture #7: Tolerance of Faith Proclaiming Statements: Spontaneous Versus Official

There will always come a point when participants feel the need to make faith proclaiming statements such as: 'Jesus Christ is Lord' or 'Christ is with the group' or 'The Lord has risen.' All of which however could potentially offends Jews, Muslims, Buddhists etc. As John V. Taylor (1980:224) confessed:

> I recognize that the claims I have made for the person of Jesus are quite unacceptable to friends whose religion is different from mine. Yet I profoundly believe that this kind of statement should be welcomed from any of the parties in the interfaith dialogue.

The impulse to do so is frequently rooted in religious zeal, or anxiety or because it was psychologically important to them, after all, "dialogue is confessional; people speak from the experience of their own faith traditions" (Deutsch, 1984:103). Indeed, in "dialogue... the Christian normally nourishes in his heart the desire of sharing his experience of Christ, with his brother of another religion (cf. Acts 26:29; ES 46). On the other hand, it is natural that another believer would similarly desire to share his faith" (The Secretariat for Non-Christians, 1990:63). In the final analysis, the reason for the faith proclamation is not that important. It should be agreed that no offence is to be taken or inferred. Indeed, allowing participants the right to express such statement can be seen as an act of ethical communication:

> The major determinant of whether communications are ethical or unethical is to be found in the notion of choice. People have a right to make their own choices. Communications are ethical to the extent that they facilitate the individual's freedom of choice...Communications are unethical to the extent that they interfere with the individual's freedom of choice... (DeVito, 1985:13).

If offence does occur, then it should be treated respectfully and countered with a similar faith proclaiming statement from the potentially aggrieved Other (e.g., 'And may Allah be here also' or 'God willing' from the devout Muslim; or 'Shalom' from the devout Jew). This in turn is likewise accepted by the Other automatically but not offensively.

Nothing can be more off-putting than not being able to express solidarity with ones' own religious tradition. Therefore, any attempt to stifle such expressions can only engender further suspicion, anxiety and trepidation; albeit, even if it can also generate fear in Others. For example, "persecution in the name of Christ struck terror in the hearts and souls of Jews that they could not calmly mention the name of Jesus, who was held to be the cause of all the cruelty meted out to them" (Trepp, 1982:159). However, such traumatised persons should not be on official dialogue teams, uncounselled.

Pragmatically speaking, this dialogue barrier is easily accommodated and the need for it, if anxiety based, can eventually peter out. In time, this positive attitude will come to be expected and automatically tolerated. This possibility was indicated by one anonymous participant following the 1970 World Council of Churches event at Ajaltoun, Lebanon:

> ...who actually led the prayer or meditation, a Christian or a Muslim, or a Hindu, or a Buddhist, did not much matter, what actually was said during prayer was not all important, whether a Muslim would say "Amen" after a Christian prayer mentioning Sonship of Christ, was not the question; what we really became aware of was our common human situation before God and in God (Hesselgrave, 1978:231).

Interestingly, Eric J. Sharpe (1974) reported how Indian theological students produced a Christian prayer for Indian Independence Day which had the usual references to Jesus Christ but also the following Sanskrit passage from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (I.iii.28): "*Asato ma sad gamaya! tamaso ma jyotir gamaya! mrtyor mamrtam gamaya!* (89)." "(Translated: From the unreal lead me to the real! From darkness lead me to the light! From death lead me to immortality!" (94). It was a religious act considerate of time, place and intention. Similar bi-religious statements could be officially incorporated into all future dialogues as a sign of respect, akin to displaying each country's flag in front of the United Nations as a visible sign of solidarity.

Conversely, care has to be taken regarding official (as opposed to spontaneous) faith proclaiming statements at formal dialogues because if "we start a dialogue by arguing that Christ is the only one in whom and by whom man can be saved, there is no real possibility of dialogue. Dialogue is dead from the start" (Raguin, 1977:75). For example, angry cries of apostasy came from delegates at the World Council of Churches 7th Assembly when Korean feminist theologian, Prof. Chung Hyun Kyung's presentation:

> ...invoked the spirits of those who had been martyred and murdered throughout history, the spirits of Earth, Air and Water, flora and fauna which have been exploited, and linked these '*Han*ridden-spirits' with the spirit of the Liberator, our brother Jesus, tortured and killed on the cross (Blombery, 1991:27).

Tolerance of faith proclaiming statements would certainly have born fruit here and avoided the obvious embarrassment to Prof. Kyung and the event organisers.

In the Christian West, to make an offer to dialogue may be an expression of interest, respect and enthusiasm for the dialogic enterprise, but for an Arab Muslim it might be considered a form of disrespect. For example:

> When an Arab says "God willing," as in "God willing, I will see you tomorrow," he is likely to mean it quite literally: only if Allah sees fit will we be here when the sun rises. And *M'sh'Allah*, "God willing," is a part of almost every greeting and farewell. It is not surprising, then, that one seems to be treading upon God's domain when asking a devout Moslem to anticipate the future (Condon and Yousef, 1975:112).

Such *prima facie* innocuous sources of disrespect can lurk anywhere. For example, the Christian phrase "The Father" spoken in the presence of Muslims can seriously aggravate them because:

> This is a term abhorrent to Muslims in reference to God, because it is understood in the sense of physical generation, and to say that God is father implies to them that he must have a wife: therefore on that ground they are perfectly right in rejecting the term as blasphemous. Nor do they admit the term in the metaphysical sense that God is the father of all men, who stand to him in the relation of children (Guillaume, 1979:195).

Hopefully, such potential problems will be avoided or else quickly accommodated and transmuted in a spirit of tolerance and understanding because no malicious intent was intended; besides, each participant must be free to use valid terms comfortable to themselves. For example, Sikh services end with "May Almighty be good to all" (Kapoor, 1990:5) which is an appropriate closure for most dialogue events. Therefore, it is not too surprising to find that:

> The question of prayer and worship in the context of dialogue is extremely difficult and delicate. Some people from Asia and Europe have expressed great hesitation in this regard. Worship is either totally ignored in inter-religious gatherings or accepted in an uncritical way with almost total disregard for basic differences in tradition, liturgy, and spiritual sensibilies. Worship, however, touches the deep core of religious life and involves the whole person in the community of believers (Samartha, 1981:46-47).

Given its profound effects, the issue of faith proclaiming statements could itself become a dialogue issue. This latter approach was adopted by the Women in Faith group (Levitt, 1987) during the construction of an interreligious worship service - the logical extension of officially approved faith proclaiming statements. Their first planning session consisted of a Protestant, a Jew and a Roman Catholic who together designed a piece of creative work which incorporated sacred music, liturgical dance and readings; candle lighting, hymn singing and public prayers; movement, namings

and silence; and the evoking of both Adonai and the Eternal Spirit (Baron *et al*, 1987). Indeed, the design and execution of the service was itself a laudable act of interreligiosity. In addition, the "sharing of work over a long time, acceptance of the differences of another while feeling free to express one's own diversities - this shimmering but strong ribbon of experience brought understanding, creativity, and enjoyment" (Levitt, 1987:183). This is exactly what one would expect from caring, cooperative, like-minded (co-)religionists.

The importance of interreligious cooperation via religious art is taking on greater importance today as indicated by the creation of *Chant for the Universe: An Interfaith Anthem*. This contained music and text, full score and notations for organ, choir, cantor and narrator (Prouix *et al.*, 1993). It was commissioned for performance at the Inaugural Ceremonies of the World's Religions (Rockefeller Chapel, University of Chicago, November 4, 1989) to mark the opening of interfaith services culminating in the 1993 World Parliament of Religions. Prayer and meditation as a public act of interreligiosity was also employed by Pope John Paul II (October 1986) when he invited religious leaders to join him at St Francis's home town of Assisi to pray for world peace. Many attended and used prayers from their own faith traditions in the presence of prestigious religious Others.

Likewise, numerous people regularly pray the Jain's *Universal Prayer for Peace* (by Satish Kumar): "Lead me from Death to Life From Falsehood to Truth Lead me from Despair to Hope from Fear to Trust Lead me from Hate to Love from War to Peace Let Peace fill our heart, our World, our Universe" (Braybrooke, 1993b:122). A copy of the prayer was contained in *A Sourcebook for the Community of Religions* along with prayers and teachings from Baha'ism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native American Indian (Cheyenne), Shintoism, Sikhism, Spiritualism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism (Beversluis, 1993:235-237).

For those worried about contamination by the religious Other's prayers and teachings, then communal meditation is a safer alternative. Shared "prayer is not always possible between different religious communities, but shared meditation is becoming more common as Christians come to greater knowledge of their respective traditions" (Cenkner, 1990:9). Interestingly, Capuchin Fr. Anthony Scannell ran an ecumenical worship service at the Directors Guild of America using a short film depicting nature. This was the meditative part of his religious services during the 1998 Los Angeles City of the Angels film festival: *Chasing the Sacred: The Cinema of Spirituality*. Such a plurality of methods (i.e., prayers, teachings, meditation, film-watching) can be usefully employed by dialogue organisers as both a positive interreligious act, and as a priming mechanism for the unavoidable change and mutual transformations to come.

Posture #8: An Expectation of Change, Mutual Transformation and Risk-Taking

As Prof. Harvey Cox (1989:17) advised: "To enter honestly into dialogue is to

embark on a perilous personal voyage with no clear destination in view," however, a fairly certain outcome can be anticipated. Religious dialogue provides "a space of encounter and the experience of transformation" (Krieger, 1993:352) that can "signify a change in, and itself change, people's academic as well as personal faith positions" (Morgan, 1995:159). Although the anxious expectation of change, mutual transformation and risk-taking is probably the biggest obstacle confronting new dialoguers, it is also the greatest practical result which can be achieved because "authentic dialogue will necessarily carry us beyond itself. That is, authentic dialogue changes its participants in such a way that new developments beyond dialogue must follow" (Cobb Jr, 1982:47). "Once it is achieved, its significance transcends the achievement, opening the way to a still newer stage" (Smith, 1973:54). Indeed, it "is both a sociological and psychological fact that once change occurs beyond a certain point there is no return to the original premise. A paradigm shift occurs" (Law, 1994:40-41), or put more bluntly "one is changed by serious conversation, otherwise it was not genuine" (Smith, 1981:193).

The concept of mutual transformation embodies the idea that all life is in a process of evolvement. When applied to dialogue, it is the recognition that each participant (and religion) must grow from being challenged by the Other because: "No one who enters—really enters—remains unaffected. If they do, there is room for doubt whether they have entered at all. Dialogue changes those who risk it" (Cox, 1989:17). This is **the** risk of dialoguing, for "in the process of listening one will be forced to change in a more than superficial way" (Cobb Jr., 1982:48). For example, D. C. Mulder (2000:101) reported that at a 1993 dialogue between Dutch and Middle East theologians in Limassol, Cyprus, some participants were shocked when it was concluded:

> In Christology Jesus should be seen as a genuine Jew who honoured and fulfilled the Torah. That truth has been neglected, very often even forgotten, by the church in the course of its history, also in the course of the formulation of its doctrine. In order to rediscover the real Jesus we should become apprentices of present-day Jewish scholars.

This is shocking for some. Others could be shocked at Maura O'Neill's (1990:105) feminist challenge: "Have male Christian participants in dialogue attempted to experience religion as much from within a women's perspective as from within a Buddhist's perspective?" However, these shocks are understandable given that androcentrism and high walls between religions that had blinded their views for centuries. Indeed, as Pim Valkenberg (2000:111) noted regarding the religions of the book:

> While Christianity acknowledges its relation with Judaism, Jews often do not want to accept this relation; while Islam acknowledges its relations with Judaism and Christianity — albeit with more reservations — these religions often downplay their relation with Islam. Christianity, being in the middle position,

acknowledges its predecessor, but ignores its successor.

Indeed, one cannot help but spiritually grow because the "praxis of interreligious dialogue itself...does not merely bear a "religious dimension." It is a religious experience" (Tracy, 1990:98). "Dialogue thus becomes a source of hope and a factor of communion in mutual transformation" (The Secretariat for Non-Christians, 1990:64) but if "someone remains at the level of proclamation or argumentation, no dialogue is possible; there is only overt or covert apologetic polemic" (Krieger, 1993:352).

Interestingly, Raimon Panikkar (1993:121) considered that "interreligious enrichment could produce a new ability of perception and ultimately a new form of religious awareness and of religion in general." Not only heightened awareness is possible but also positive faith mutation:

> Inter-religious encounters and the changes that they bring are, of course, wider than those between individuals and through conferences. They are part of the whole social and political ambience of the world in which we live. Intensive meetings can influence and affect religious positions and bring about long-term change to the religions themselves. People's maps of belief are complex and they are shifting all the time. Interfaith encounter is one factor in those shifts, in the mutation of religions (Morgan, 1995:163).

Leonard Swidler (1982:9-10) also mused about the transforming effects of dialogue:

> That means that there is a risk in dialogue; we might have to change, and change can be disturbing. But of course that is the point of dialogue — change and growth. We enter into dialogue so that we can learn, change and grow, not so we can force change on the other, as one hopes to do in a debate...because in dialogue each partner comes with the intention of learning and changing him or herself, one's partner in fact will also change. Thus the alleged goal of debate, and much more, is accomplished far more effectively in dialogue.

It was a point akin to Peter Neuner's (1991:289) formulation of the intrafaith process:

> In dialogue, which is meant to lead to understanding, my self-understanding is made new. The aim of the dialogue is a fusion of the horizons - of my own and the unfamiliar horizon. In understanding I remain myself, as yet as an unfamiliar world opens up to me, I become another. A new world thus discloses itself to me, and my own self-understanding assumes a new form. The person who is engaged in understanding changes, and one's horizon expands. Thus dialogue opens up the future and freedom to act. New worlds and possibilities for action open up for me in the act of understanding. Understanding demands that I should take my own and the unfamiliar horizon equally seriously; and when the two horizons fuse, the aim is achieved.

This risk was put more bluntly by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin (1982:25): "Each meeting with a non-Christian partner in dialogue therefore puts my own Christianity at risk" however, as he also admitted, "dialogue which is safe from all possible risk is no true dialogue" (29).

David Tracy (1990:95) took this risk/change notion one step further by arguing that dialogue risk-taking is a desirable **methodological** necessity: "It cannot be overemphazied that, if genuine dialogue is to occur, we must be willing to put everything at risk. Otherwise, we do not allow attention to the logic of the questioning elicited by this particular subject matter." Unfortunately, the notions of change, mutual transformation and risk-taking has overtones of manipulation. At worst it can confirm a fear of being contaminated, "got at," or "co-opted" (Cunningham, 1987:11), especially if anxious religions hear disturbing comments such as:

> The Christian religion will receive new life when it is willing to die to the demonic forms its claim to finality has taken. It will then enter fully into the power of the "name of Jesus." Christians must be willing to accept death of their ideologies to enter into the resurrection of new being (Dawe, 1978:32)!

Even if this statement is ultimately true (theologically speaking), references to "demonic forms" and "death of their ideologies" will not be perceived neutrally by those already fearful of dialogue. It is best to avoid such inflammable rhetoric.

Dialogue organisers should recognise this potential fear and deal with it early while emphasising that change/growth is: (a) **natural** (via biological motifs); (b) **beneficial** (via "advancement" references); (c) **educational** (i.e., gaining knowledge); (d) **faith strengthening** (i.e., growing towards the Almighty); and (e) **equitable** (because it happens to all). Philip H. Hwang's (1989:6) biological growth motif is particularly effective here:

> Theologically, interreligious dialogue is needed for the refinement, development, and if necessary, revision of one's own religion. For religious faith is never static or fixed, but it always moves forward by meeting other religions or social ideologies. A tadpole must become a frog one day; it cannot remain a tadpole forever. And as a grown frog, it must live with other frogs within the same pond. In a similar way, no religion can remain in its early stages; it must mature and meet other religions in a dynamic fashion.

This biological growth motif and "same pond" reference can be taken one stage further by releasing Philip Hwang's tadpoles-cum-frogs into Hans Kung's (1994:131) religious river system metaphor:

> ...there are features which the religions have in common. Just as the natural river system of this earth and the landscape shaped by them are extremely different, but the rivers and streams of the different continents all have similar profiles and patterns of flow, obey similar laws, cut clefts in the hills, wind in the plains

and inexorably seek a way to the sea, so too it is with the religious river systems of this earth.

This means that all faiths must continue going to dialogues to keep growing and become enlivened, grown frogs navigating their way through twisting river systems towards the pond of God. Overall:

> Dialogue involves mutual transformation...not necessarily in the sense of forsaking old convictions, or even in the sense of abandoning long-standing patterns of action, but in the sense that through dialogue one can be raised to an enlivened and more vital way of being in the world (Bryant, 1990:8).

If this general appeal should fail then reiterating Frederick Streng's (1976:196) advice is suggested: "understanding the religious life of man and reflecting on "the characteristics" of religious life are not just abstract problems to be approached by a few specialists in history, philosophy, or theology; they are directly related to what it means to be human." Presumably no one wants to be less human, and as Paul Mojzes (1978:11) argued in his 23rd ground rule: "Dialogue occurs between persons or groups of persons, not between disembodied ideas." If that appeal should fail then the following argument could be offered: "Since every religion has to do with transcendent reality, it is part of the truth of that religion to be dissatisfied with its extant forms" (Smith, 1973:50).

If the intellectual approach should fail then one could proffer the following spiritual argument: "Conversion and the transformation of human lives were never our doing, never directly caused by us, in the first place. That remains in the domain of God" (Carter, 1978:179). For those who are still "afraid that dialogue is a risky business, the response can only be one of faith. If dialogue is a theological exercise that flows from a commitment to a religious ideology and an experience of the holy, then there can be no other alternative" (Saliba, 1993:80). Besides, "God's truth vastly exceeds the truth any single tradition can convey and that God's truth will eventually prevail" (Cox, 1989:73).

Ideally, the reference to growth and change should be sought from within the religion's sacred texts to give added authority and legitimacy (e.g., Col. 2:19 for Christians). This will help neutralise conceptions of mutual transformation as personal contamination, corruption, or faith perversion. Especially if used in conjunction with other positive metaphors, such as Darlis J. Swan's (1998:356) musical example:

> Ideally this [dialogue reception] can be seen as the final movement of a great symphony that will be remembered, cherished, and celebrated. The orchestration begins with the dialogues — in many ways a solo — but anticipates the full orchestra, involving a variety of instruments with unique sounds. We may rejoice in the music as it leads us into the next century, honoring and respecting the memory of the first sounds we heard.

Conclusion

The judicious cultivation and application of these eight prescriptive and proscriptive dispositional postures can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the dialogic enterprise, the quality of dialogue praxis, the participants interpersonal satisfaction and their psycho-spiritual growth. While simultaneously lessening the chances of dialogic death, stagnation or decay. This task is especially urgent when considering Scott Daniel Dunbar's (1998:460) ominous advice that dialogue "needs to be undertaken perennially as preventative medicine to avoid bloodshed in the name of religion." Nor does this enhancement task stop here. Further research is needed to explore its other taxonomic and attitudinal contours. Especially those rooted in human communications theory, if for no other reason that to help neutralise Leonard Louis Levinson's (1967:64) humorously cynical definition of Dialogue as "Monologues cut in two."

References

Aarhus Workshop. 1978. Theological reflection on the encounter of the Church with Marxism in various cultural contexts. In *Varieties of Christian-Marxist dialogue*, edited by P Mojzes, 64-86. The Ecumenical Press, Philadelphia.

Ali, S A. 1989. Problems & possibilities of interreligious dialogue from a Muslim perspective. *Dialogue & Alliance* 3:25-27.

Baldock, J. 1994. Responses to religious pluralism in Australia. *Australian Religion Studies Review* 7(1):21-31.

Baron, V, C De Sola, N Levitt, J Ronayne and C Vincie. 1987. Gathering: An interreligious worship service. In *Women of faith in dialogue*, edited by V R Mollenkott, 184-191. Crossroad, New York.

Basset, J-C. 1992. Decalogue of dialogue. *Current Dialogue* 23:35-39.

Bent, A J van der. 1978. Christian and Marxist responses to the challenge of secularization and secularism. In *Varieties of Christian-Marxist dialogue*, edited by P Mojzes, 152-166. The Ecumenical Press, Philadelphia.

Bermbach, U. 1978. Socio-political theses for the Christian-Marxist dialogue. In *Varieties of Christian-Marxist dialogue*, edited by P Mojzes, 87-99. The Ecumenical Press, Philadelphia.

Beversluis, J. D. (ed). 1993. *A sourcebook for the community of religions*. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago.

Blombery, 'T. 1991. Unity in diversity? Some impressions of the WCC 7th Assembly. *Australian Religion Studies Review* 4(1):24-31.

Borelli, J. 1990. Introduction. In *Handbook for interreligious dialogue* (2nd ed.), edited by J Borelli, 1-4. Silver Burdett & Ginn, Morristown NJ.

Braybrooke, M. 1993a. A pilgrimage of hope. In *A sourcebook for the community of religions*, edited by J D Beversluis, 104-109. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago.

- 1993b. A study guide for interreligious cooperation and understanding. In *A sourcebook for*

the community of religions, edited by J. D. Beversluis, 111-115, 117, 120-124. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago.

Breslauer, S. D. 1984. Bible. Jewish view. In *A dictionary of the Jewish-Christian dialogue*, edited by L. Klenicki and G. Wigoder, 16-19. Paulist Press, New York.

Brockway, A. R. and J. P. Rajashekar (eds.). 1987. *New religious movements and the churches*. WCC Publications, Geneva.

Brown, D. 1984. Dialogue. In *A dictionary of religious education*, edited by J. M. Sutcliffe, 112-113. SCM Press/The Christian Education Movement, London.

Brunett, A. 1999. The harvest and the challenge: The ecumenical vocation on the threshold of the third millennium. *One in Christ: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* 35(4):299-312.

Bryant, M. D. 1990. Interfaith encounter and dialogue in a trinitarian perspective. In *Christianity and the wider ecumenism*, edited by P C Phan, 3-20. Paragon House, New York.

Carter, J. R. 1978. Translational theology: An expression of Christian faith in a religiously plural world. In *Christian faith in a religiously plural world*, edited by D. G. Dawe and J. B. Carman, 168-180. Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY.

Cenkner, W. 1990. The Hindu tradition. In *Handbook for interreligious dialogue* (2nd ed.), edited by J. Borelli, 8-10. Silver Burdett & Ginn, Morristown NJ.

Cobb Jr., J. B. 1982. *Beyond dialogue: Toward a mutual transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*. Fortress Press, Philadelphia.

Condon, J. C. and F. S. Yousef. 1975. *An introduction to intercultural communication*. Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis.

Cox, H. 1989. *Many mansions: A Christian's encounter with other faiths*. Collins, London.

Cunningham, S. 1987. A meeting of the minds. In *Women of faith in dialogue*, edited by V R Mollenkott, 9-16. Crossroad, New York.

Dawe, D. G. 1978. Christian faith in a religiously plural world. In *Christian faith in a religiously plural world*, edited by D. G. Dawe and J. B. Carman, 13-33. Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY.

Dean, T. 1988. Universal theology and dialogical dialogue. In *Toward a universal theology of religion*, edited by L Swidler, 162-174. Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY.

DeFleur, M. Kearney, P. and T. G. Plax. 1993. *Fundamentals of human communication*. Mayfield, Mountain View CA.

Deutsch, C. 1984. Jewish-Christian dialogue. Christian view. In *A dictionary of the Jewish-Christian dialogue*, edited by L. Klenicki and G. Wigoder, 103-105. Paulist Press, New York.

DeVito, J. A. 1985. *Human communication: The basic course* (3rd ed.). Harper and Row, New York.

Dunbar, S. D. 1998. The place of interreligious dialogue in the academic study of religion. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35(3-4):455-469.

Dwyer, J. 1993. *The business communication handbook* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall, New York.

Engstrom, T. W. and E. R. Dayton. 1984. *The Christian leaders 60-second management guide*. Word Books, Waco TX.

Failletaz, V. 1982. The next frontier: Understanding other communities of faith. In *Interreligious dialogue: Facing the next frontier*, edited by R W Rousseau, 1-8. Ridge Row Press, Montrose

PA.

Fitzgerald, M. L. 1994. Interreligious dialogue today: Obstacles and opportunities. *Journal of Dharma* 19(1):68-73.

Fredericks, J. L. 1998. Interreligious friendship: A new theological virtue. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35(2):159-174.

Fung, H. 1989. Chinese philosophical foundations for interreligious dialogue. *Dialogue & Alliance* 3:45-50.

Grim, J. A. 1990. Native American traditions. In *Handbook for interreligious dialogue* (2nd ed.), edited by J Borelli, 5-7. Silver Burdett & Ginn, Morristown NJ.

Gordis, D M. 1991. Interreligious dialogue: Lessons from my father's house and beyond. *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal* 40(4):466-470.

Guillaume, A. 1979. *Islam*. Penguin, Middlesex.

Hawkins, L. and M. Hudson. npd. *The art of effective negotiation*. The Business Library, Melbourne.

Hesselgrave, D. J. 1978. Interreligious dialogue - biblical and contemporary perspectives. In *Theology and mission*, edited by D. J. Hesselgrave, 227-240. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI.

Hwang, P. H. 1989. Interreligious dialogue: Its reasons, attitudes & necessary assumptions. *Dialogue & Alliance* 3:5-15.

Kapoor, S. S. 1990. The contribution of Sikh religion towards interreligious tolerance and respect. *The Sikh Courier International Quarterly* 30(70):3-5.

Klenicki, L. 1991. Toward a process of healing: Understanding the other as a person of God. In *Toward a theological encounter: Jewish understandings of Christianity*, edited by L. Klenicki, 1-15. Paulist Press, New York.

Knitter, P. F. 1982. World religions and the finality of Christ: A critique of Hans Kung's "On Being a Christian." In *Interreligious dialogue: Facing the next frontier*, edited by R. W. Rousseau, 202-221. Ridge Row Press, Montrose PA.

Kodera, J. 1989. Beyond agreeing to disagree - A future direction in interfaith dialogue. In *Interreligious dialogue: Voices from a new frontier*, edited by M. D. Bryant and F. Flinn, 151-161. New Era/Paragon House, New York.

Krieger, D. J. 1993. Communication theory and interreligious dialogue. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30(3-4):331-353.

Kung, H. 1988. What is true religion? Toward an ecumenical criteriology. In *Toward a universal theology of religion*, edited by L. Swidler, 231-250. Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY.

- 1994. World peace - world religions - world ethic. In *Islam: A challenge for Christianity*, edited by H. Kung and J. Moltmann, 127-139. SCM Press, London.

Lamb, W. W. H. 1994. Intellectual eros: A model for inter-faith dialogue. *Australian Religion Studies Review* 7(1):2-8.

Law, D. 1994. The Lotus and the Cross. A personal journey into religious interconnectedness. *Australian Religion Studies Review* 7(1):38-44.

Levinson, L. L. 1967. *Webster's unafraid dictionary*. Collier Books, New York.

Levitt, N. U. 1987. Preparing an interreligious worship service. In *Women of faith in dialogue*, edited by V R Mollenkott, 179-183. Crossroad, New York.

Mathias, A. 1994. The future of interreligious dialogue: Threats and promises. *Journal of Dharma* 19(1):10-12.

Mojzes, P. 1978. The current status of the Christian-Marxist dialogue and suggested guidelines for conducting dialogue. In *Varieties of Christian-Marxist dialogue*, edited by P. Mojzes, 3-14. The Ecumenical Press, Philadelphia.

Mollenkott, V. R. 1987. An evangelical perspective on interreligious dialogue. In *Women of faith in dialogue*, edited by V R Mollenkott, 61-73. Crossroad, New York.

Moore, B. and Habel, N. 1982. *When religion goes to school: Typology of religion for the classroom.* Texts in Humanities, Adelaide SA.

Morgan, P. 1995. The study of religions and interfaith encounter. *Numen* 42(2):156-171.

Mulder, D C. 1989. Dialogue and syncretism: Some concluding observations. In *Dialogue and syncretism: An interdisciplinary approach*, edited by J. Gort, H. Vroom, R. Fernhout and A. Wessels, 203-211. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI.

- 2000. Christians, Jews and Muslims: An ecumenical-theological conversation (I). *International Review of Missions* 89(352):99-104.

Murphy, F. J. 1978. Milestones of Christian-Marxist dialogue in France. In *Varieties of Christian-Marxist dialogue*, edited by P. Mojzes, 139-151. The Ecumenical Press, Philadelphia.

Myers, G. E. and M. T. Myers. 1992. *The dynamics of human communication: A laboratory approach* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill, New York.

Neuner, P. 1991. Dialogue, intrafaith. In *Dictionary of the ecumenical movement*, edited by N. Lossky, J. M. Bonino, J. Pobee, T. Stransky, G. Wainwright and P. Webb, 287-291. WCC Publications, Geneva.

Newbigin, L. 1982. The basis, purpose and manner of inter-faith dialogue. In *Interreligious dialogue: Facing the next frontier*, edited by R W Rousseau, 13-31. Ridge Row Press, Montrose PA.

Ochs, P. 1993. Pragmatic conditions for Jewish-Christian theological dialogue. *Modern Theology* 9(2):123-140.

Ogden, S. M. 1994. Some thoughts on a Christian theology of interreligious dialogue. *Criterion* 33:5-10.

O'Neill, M. 1990. *Women speaking, women listening: Women in interreligious dialogue.* Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY.

Panikkar, R. 1975. Editorial: Inter-religious dialogue: Some principles. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12(3):407-409.

- 1988. The invisible harmony: A universal theory of religion or a cosmic confidence in reality? In *Toward a universal theology of religion*, edited by L. Swidler, 118-153. Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY.

- 1993. *A dwelling place for wisdom.* Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville KY.

Pereira, A. J. 1987. Catholic-Marxist dialogue in Budapest. *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 51(6):264-276.

Peters, T. 1986. A Christian theology of interreligious dialogue. *The Christian Century*

103(30):883-885.

Pieterse, H. J. C. 1990. A dialogical theory of communication from a practical theological perspective. *The Evangelical Quarterly* 62(3):223-240.

Powers, J. A. 1987. Women of faith and this volume. In *Women of faith in dialogue*, edited by V. R. Mollenkott, 3-6. Crossroad, New York.

Prouix, R, H. Bronstein and R. R. Kidd. 1993. Chant for the universe: An interfaith anthem. In *A sourcebook for the community of religions*, edited by J. D. Beversluis, 238-239. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago.

Raguin, Y. 1977. Dialogue: Differences and common grounds. In *Faith in the midst of faiths: Reflections on dialogue in community*, edited by S. J. Samartha, 74-78. World Council of Churches, Geneva.

Rengel, P. 1987. *Seeds of light: Inspirations from my higher self*. H. J. Kramer, Tiburon CA.

Romic, J. R. 1978. Dialogue between Marxists and Christians as a presupposition of coexistence in freedom. In *Varieties of Christian-Marxist dialogue*, edited by P. Mojzes, 114-129. The Ecumenical Press, Philadelphia.

Saliba, J. A. 1993. Dialogue with the new religious movements: Issues and prospects. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30(1):51-80.

Samartha, S. J. 1981. *Courage for dialogue: Ecumenical issues in inter-religious relationships*. World Council of Churches, Geneva.

Sandidge, J. L. 1992. Dialogue, Roman Catholic and Classical Pentecostal. In *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements*, edited by S. M. Burgess, G. B. McGee and P. H. Alexander, 240-244. Regency/Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI.

Sharpe, E. J. 1974. The goals of inter-religious dialogue. In *Truth and dialogue in world religions: Conflicting truth-claims*, edited by J. Hick, 77-95. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.

- 1977. *Faith meets faith: Some Christian attitudes to Hinduism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. SCM Press, London.

- 1992. The limits of interreligious dialogue. *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 9(2):228-235.

Shapiro, R. M. 1989. Moving the fence: One Rabbi's view of interreligious dialogue. In *Interreligious dialogue: Voices from a new frontier*, edited by M. D. Bryant and F. Flinn, 31-40. New Era/Paragon House, New York.

Sigal, L. 1993. A grassroots model. The Grand Rapids Interfaith Dialogue Association. In *A sourcebook for the community of religions*, edited by J. D. Beversluis, 109-110. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago.

Smith, W. C. 1973. Comparative religion: Whither—and why? In *The history of religions: Essays in methodology*, edited by M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, 31-58. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- 1981. *Towards a world theology: Faith and the comparative history of religion*. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.

Spiegler, G. E. 1989. Dialogue as affirmation: Franz Rosenzweig's contribution to Christian-Jewish conversations. In *Religious issues and interreligious dialogue: An analysis and*

sourcebook of developments since 1945, edited by C. W. Fu and G. E. Spiegler, 427-435. Greenwood Press, New York.

Streng, F. J. 1976. *Understanding religious life* (2nd ed.). Dickenson, Encino CA.

Swan, D. J. 1998. The bilateral dialogues: New visions and challenges. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35(3-4):353-356.

Swearer, D. K. 1977. *Dialogue: The key to understanding other religions*. The Westminister Press, Philadelphia.

Swidler, L. 1982. Ground rules for interreligious dialogue. In *Interreligious dialogue: Facing the next frontier*, edited by R. W. Rousseau, 9-12. Ridge Row Press, Montrose PA.

Taylor, J. V. 1980. The theological basis of inter-faith dialogue. In *Christianity and other religions: Selected readings*, edited by J. Hick and B. Hebblethwaite, 212-233. Collins, Glasgow.

Thangaraj, M. T. 1991. Toward a dialogical theology of mission. In *Theology at the end of modernity: Essays in honor of Gordon D. Kaufman*, edited by S. G. Davaney, 161-176. Trinity Press International, Philadelphia.

The Secretariat for Non-Christians. 1990. The attitude of the Church towards the followers of other religions. In *Handbook for interreligious dialogue* (2nd ed.), edited by J. Borelli, 57-64. Silver Burdett & Ginn, Morristown NJ.

Tracy, D. 1990. *Dialogue with the other: The inter-religious dialogue*. Peeters Press, Louvain.

Trepp, L. 1982. *Judaism: Development and life* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth, Belmont CA.

Valkenberg, P. 2000. Confessing one God admist Muslims and Jews: An ecumenical-theological conversation (II). *International Review of Missions* 89(352):105-114.

Yoder, D. L. Hugenberg and S Wallace. 1993. *Creating competent communication*. WCB Brown & Benchmark, Madison WI.

Zago, M. 2000. The new millennium and the emerging religious encounters. *Missiology: An International Review* 28(1):5-18.