

Interreligious dialogue - a paradigm of modernity

Contemporary multiculturalism gives us a picture of a world in which no one can live in isolation, due to modern technology that allows us to go through huge spaces in very short time and distance communication that has become an easy thing. Nowadays, we can not live alone, other people flooding our privacy, but beyond the human interfaces that we interact with, life experiences are built in cultures, very different from our culture which is under the influence of Christianity. Culture blends well with religion, culture being a product of the human spirit and therefore, religion, which essentially addresses to the link between human and divine, is meant to contribute to the enrichment of this heritage. Therefore, the interreligious dialogue is an important resource on the way to the harmonization of the interaction of cultures existing in the world today.

The interaction between religions and cultures is a reality given by the fact that we all walk on this planet, but today it is much enhanced, the diversity of cultures and religions generating, over time, various attitudes and behaviors. From polemical confrontation to army confrontation, from doctrinal dispute to mutual ignorance, from peaceful coexistence to dialogue, the interfaith relations palette was a very large, depending on the specificities of each religion separately. We can talk about an interreligious dialogue when it takes the form of a study, a survey of some discussions on doctrines, religious figures or documents involved in the dialogue. At the same time, we can speak about an intrareligious dialogue when it becomes a religious act in itself, an approach in search of truth, an inner opening that goes beyond the simple human discussion as Julien Ries said. Proposed by Raimundo Panikkar, this typology is not in current use yet.

Given the general concept of the circumstances of place and people, the modes of procedure and their implementation, we can talk about a certain typology of interreligious dialogue. Thus, there is a *dialogue of*

life that relates to the spirit of openness, to the receipt of the other, to the religious coexistence between Christians and non-Christians to share the joys, sufferings and all concerns. There is then a *dialogue of facts*, which involves the meeting of Christians with non-Christians in the construction of the earthly city and economic and human development in general, the focus being on highlighting different values. A third category, the *dialogue of the religious heritage* refers to the actions that the representatives of different religions meet within the dialogue. This type of dialogue aims at the participation in symposia, congresses, conferences, seminars and the publication of works. This work requires a knowledge of religions or, at least, a desire to know them. There is a fourth form of dialogue called the *dialogue of religious experience* in which the participants, grown in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual goods: experiences of prayer, monastic experience, contemplation, study and meditation on the Holy Scriptures.

The interreligious dialogue is based on the alliance made by God with all the people at creation (Genesis 1-11), the proclamation of the kingdom of God made by the Savior (Matthew 8: 10-11) and the theology of the Church Fathers. The dialogue involves a mystery of unity: one human family, a divine plan of salvation and the active presence of God's Spirit in the religious life of mankind. At the same time, the interreligious dialogue claims a fair assessment of the various religious traditions, as well as great respect for the human and spiritual values they contain.

Objection was made that the concept of "dialogue" is not found in the Holy Scripture and that, in this way, the dialogue lacks its biblical authority. But, the Scriptures contain many other concepts, expressions and events that suggest the practice itself in direct relationship with the other faith. Father Professor Nicholas Achimescu shows that although the noun "dialogue" is not found in the Bible, yet, friendly relationships and personal interviews and frequent suggestions are clearly prominent in the pages of Scripture. God's relationship with His chosen people and other nations, the real relationships and obligations involved in His covenant with Noah and Abraham, the kings' and judges' work... do not represent forms of monologue.

In the New Testament where we are depicted how the Savior comes into contact with people, the dialogue does not seem to be contrary to the spirit in which he speaks with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the centurion and his own disciples. There are occasions when He refuses to

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interfere, when His presence divides people. As such, we can say that if the dialogue is not a scriptural term, it is a scriptural practice, being used by the Saviour Christ Himself. The preaching that the Scripture exhorts us does not invalidate in any way the dialogue with each other, even if the other is a non-Christian, but no dialogue must claim exclusivity, making us to give up preaching.

There are, however, Orthodox authors who believe that the dialogue with non-Christian religions would be a conscious and voluntary removal from a certain self-consciousness of the Christian. Seraphim Rose believes that this dialogue cannot be considered a dialogue of good intentions, but a suggestion of the demonic type that can catch only those who have already withdrawn so much from the Christian teaching that have become pagan. If Christian ecumenism has a weak basis in the existence of a "common Christianity" shared by many, then the non-Christian ecumenism has no argument, because there is no platform on which to achieve a unity among Christians and those who reject Christ. The participation in such a dialogue is seen by the Orthodox theologian mentioned above, as treason, counterfeiting and interior demolition of Orthodoxy.

There are other opinions on this problem. There are several Orthodox theologians that claim that, in our pluralistic society in terms of cultural and religious matters, the dialogue is inevitable. It should not have the character of a simple optional activity. People who refuse dialogue remain isolated, and this leads to the suffocation of the community which gradually becomes a ghetto. Any dialogue can exist only as a "community dialogue", representing a co-participation of all partisan of life in search of a better human community. According to this view, the opening of Christians towards those of another faith is not a betrayal of his own creed, but an expression of their Christian witness in today's world. At the same time, the dialogue of the Christian with those of other faith does not imply a denial of the uniqueness of Christ and His Church, but reflects real Christian proximity to each other. On the other hand, the lack of genuine opening betrays fear and arrogance, betrays the absence of love.

The interaction between believers of different religious traditions took various forms during the last twenty years, ranging from the exchange of courtesies, to common prayer, the juxtaposition of monologues at the statements for justice and peace in the world.

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